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**The Fishing Room as a Formative Element in Newfoundland's Coastal  
Landscape Development: A Study in Historical Geography©**

by

Chris Sturge

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Geography  
Memorial University of Newfoundland  
December, 2007

St. John's

Newfoundland

## ABSTRACT

Canada contains several recognizable landscape icons such as the concession, township and range system, long lot system, seigneurial system and the prairie section that exemplify connections between resident populations and property. Attachment to life space is nurtured through bonds with place, community and region, and in western culture is exemplified by property ownership of varying spatial arrangements, functions or appearance. In Newfoundland, a land use form called the *fishing room* evolved from coastal common property connecting marine resource distributions with shoreline from which such resources could be most efficiently exploited. This thesis explores fishing room development from European discovery in 1497 to 1805, and details how areas of coastal land were transformed into small, enclosed properties adaptable for settlement. Fishing rooms were originally defined, managed and seasonally transferred under the British fishing admiralty system which favoured an equitable sharing of coastal land among stakeholders, and promoted stability in a generally unstable trade environment. Fishing rooms were not the product of land use systems imposed arbitrarily upon an uninhabited frontier, but developed as a practical land use strategy to provide adequate shore space for living, working and production. Extended occupation of land within these systems integrated human occupancy into distinct socio-environmental entities, invited a cultural relationship with immediate bio-physical surroundings, and promoted a singular sense of place and belonging. Fishing rooms provided a proven and legitimate land use strategy in which Newfoundland inhabitants were linked through heritage and tradition to a landscape perched physically and culturally between land and sea.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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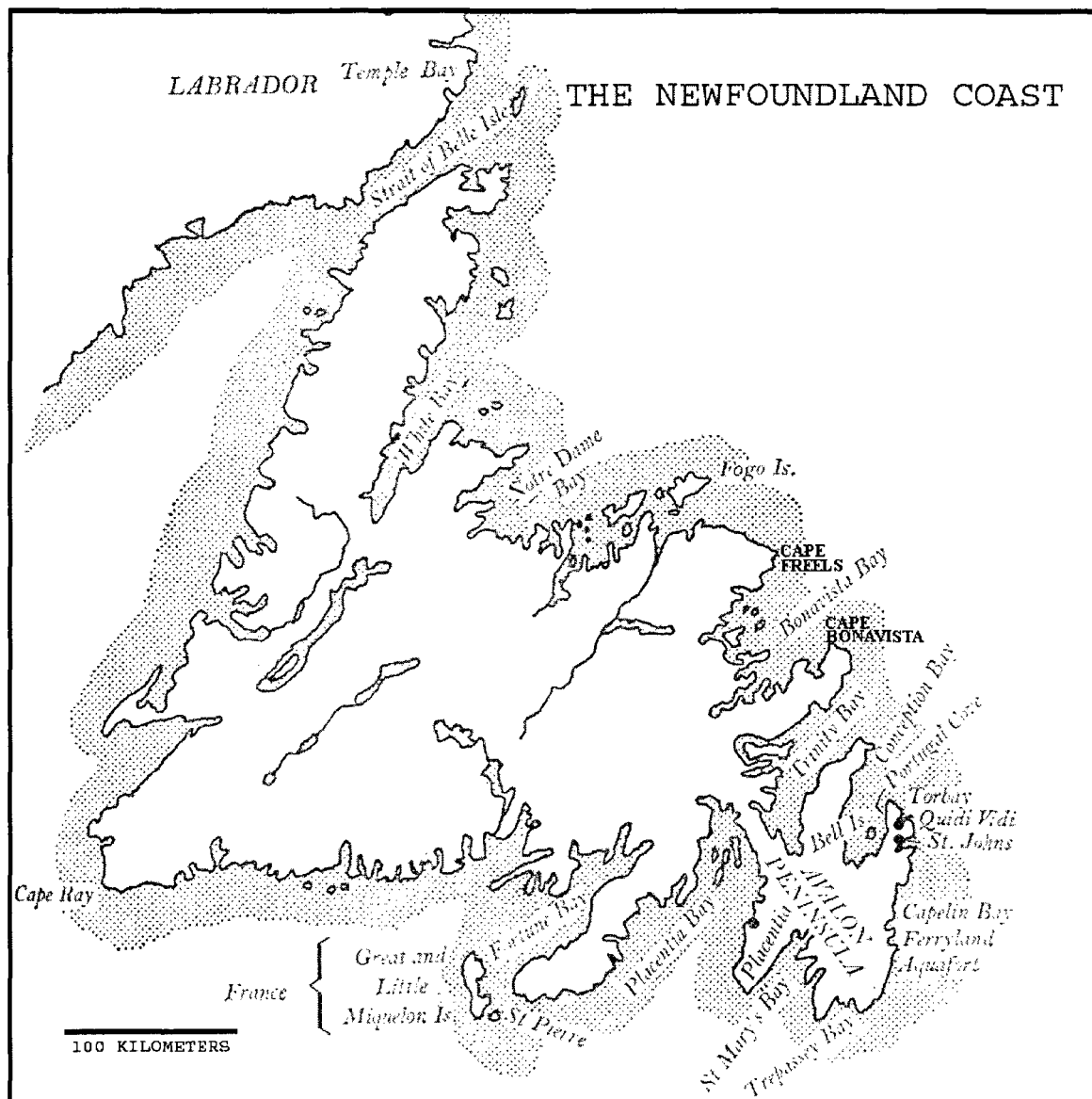
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Map 1.1: The Newfoundland Coast Showing Major Bays<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An adaptation of the map of Newfoundland found in Thomas [1794] 1968: xxiii

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

**Every town, every rural locality, had its special products and skills, its peculiarities of cultivation, its delicacies and local dishes. Round the coasts, too, whether their villages climbed steeply above rocky bays or straggled along low shores of sand and pebble, the fisherfolk were adapted to our island [England] outline, each region with traditional gear and boats shaped partly by history and partly by use to take the particular sea creatures that time had left in its waters. . . . In every part of the country generations of hands had shaped the tools necessary for its way of life, while generations of tongues had shaped the dialects apt for its expression.**

**Jacquetta Hawkes<sup>1</sup>**

In writing of her English homeland, Hawkes reminds us that human settlement, in all of its manifold forms and regional diversity, involves an adaptation of lifeways to suit particular biophysical environments. Inhabitants of English fishing villages survived by amassing an intimate knowledge of their immediate maritime surroundings that was shared and transferred through oral tradition and practical, hands-on experience. Tested life skills were preserved and modified down through the generations to render a sophisticated understanding of place that formed a solid, cultural foundation. By these effective methods, individuals learned to confront their own set of socio-economic challenges with confidence.

The discovery of the new world in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century presented considerable opportunity to European nations possessing the navigational acumen, shipping capabilities, and naval strength necessary to undertake trans-Atlantic voyages. These maritime societies, most notably in Spain, Portugal, France and England, sought a sea route to rich Asian markets, and to thereby establish a monopoly in overseas trade. During trans-Atlantic voyages, European ships' captains collected navigational and

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<sup>1</sup> Hawkes 1959: 127

scientific information about foreign coastlines and undersea landscapes that could ultimately be transformed into useful maps and sea charts. Mariners paid close attention to foreign coastlines containing natural harbours and secure anchorage, but also to diverse terrestrial and marine resource assemblages of commercial value.

Sovereign, territorial rights to overseas territory fell initially to Spain and Portugal, two Iberian nations that enjoyed political prominence in Europe, and the powerful support of the Church of Rome. For much of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they concentrated upon establishing territorial claims and exploiting trade opportunities, principally in Central and South America. But the coastline allegedly discovered in 1497 by John Cabot, the so-called *New Founde Lande*<sup>2</sup>, held less interest for the Iberians. Newfoundland's cool, northern climate, poor soils, and scattered indigenous Beothuk presence<sup>3</sup> made the area less attractive for a formal European territorial claim. Between 1540 and 1580, the Basques organized shore-based commercial fisheries that were attuned to the seasonal migration cycles of whales that regularly traversed the Straits of Belle Isle (see introductory map). These enterprises proved that overseas fisheries could be conducted profitably- however large-scale and unregulated harvesting practises resulted in the overexploitation and eventual decline of the whale stocks which, in turn, spelled the demise of Basque whaling at Newfoundland<sup>4</sup>.

Newfoundland was the nearest coastline to Europe in the Americas, contained an array of sheltered harbours, and lay in close proximity to abundant marine resources,

---

<sup>2</sup> "New-Founde-Lande", according to the 16<sup>th</sup> century European context, included coastlines in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, various Gulf of St. Lawrence islands, and extended southward to the Straits of Maine. Prowse (1895) 2002: 23

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, 1996

<sup>4</sup> Proulx, 1993; See also Barkham, 1989

most notably Atlantic cod that inhabited the area's vast continental shelf. Newfoundland had strategic value in the northern North Atlantic, but offered Europeans limited territorial value. Consequently, its shores remained *common property* land and its fishery stocks were considered an *open-access* resource that could be freely exploited by all European fishermen. In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, continental Europeans organized migratory, or *transient*, fishing expeditions which returned heavily-salted cod to market in time for Lent: a period of high consumption in Catholic Europe. In order to maximize profit, offshore fishery operations were often conducted during icy winter months, and catches were *wet-processed* using large quantities of salt before being stored aboard ship<sup>5</sup>. Continental Europeans did not generally require to make coastal landings during their fishing voyages, so their impact upon Newfoundland shores remained rather slight.

By the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, England had yet to attain political and military prominence in European affairs which restricted its participation in the Newfoundland fishery. Previously, the English had pursued cod fisheries near Ireland and Iceland where they became familiar with a Scandinavian *dry-processing* method that suited prolonged, long-distance fishery enterprises<sup>6</sup>. Unlike most continental Europeans who fished offshore, the English overseas fishery was conducted primarily inshore, and required ship crews to occupy fishing stations during the harvesting period where they salt-processed the catches for export. Fishermen occupied temporary shore bases to await the seasonal in-migrations of bait fish and cod near shore. In the English *dry* fishery, fresh cod were landed, cleaned, boned and lightly-salted before being wind-dried using special drying

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<sup>5</sup> De la Morandiere, 1962

<sup>6</sup> Head: 1976; See also Pope 2004: 11; Sinsheimer: 2001

frames. The resulting salt fish product represented an inexpensive and durable protein source that could be stored for long periods, and was widely acceptable to the European palette. Portuguese, Spanish and French Basque fishermen fished both inshore and offshore, and routinely incorporated the use of overseas shore bases, or fishing rooms, into their migratory fishery operations.

England's participation in Newfoundland cod fisheries did not begin in earnest until the late 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>7</sup>. The English generally fished inshore, and occupied a network of fishing rooms that were located along Newfoundland's south-east coast. Fishing room selection criteria encompassed three factors: the spatial distribution of inshore fishing grounds; the foreshore, or inter-tidal zone; and the availability of reasonably flat ground extending landward from waterside. Head, Innis and Templeman understood the importance of the seasonal distributions of inshore cod and bait fish to Newfoundland's economic and cultural development<sup>8</sup>. Templeman determined that cod were usually taken on the east coast of Newfoundland, and especially near peninsular headland and offshore islands situated near underwater shelves<sup>9</sup>. Head and Templeman mapped data concerning cod landings to reveal a clear association between discrete cod stock distributions and fishing community locations along the Newfoundland coast<sup>10</sup>. Ideally, fishing rooms were situated on foreshore areas where small fishing boats could navigate and land easily. Harbours that were naturally sheltered from wind and inclement weather were preferred. And lastly, fishing rooms needed to contain an area of relatively flat, cleared land that

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<sup>7</sup> Matthews 1988: 50-51; 64-65

<sup>8</sup> Templeman, 1966; See also Innis, 1978

<sup>9</sup> Lounsbury, 1969

<sup>10</sup> Head 1976: 24; See also Templeman 1966: 38

rose gently from waterside. Adequate space was needed to accommodate shore crews for the season along with the various buildings and shore infrastructure necessary to transform fresh cod into salt fish. Innis's book contains fishery information that I used to reconstruct a hypothetical English fishing room<sup>11</sup>.

A fishing room's commercial value was determined in relation to three factors: proximity to inshore cod stocks; availability of beach areas suitable for small boat navigation; and the presence of cleared shore spaces where Atlantic cod (*Gadus morua*) could be efficiently dry-processed<sup>12</sup>. Only shoreline found a convenient distance from inshore fishing grounds that could accommodate large-scale intensive shore operations was selected for fishing room establishment<sup>13</sup>. Fishing room selection criteria forged a tangible linkage between *inshore fishing ground*<sup>14</sup> distributions, and shore positions where these resources could be most conveniently exploited.

For English migratory fishermen, coastal access was vital, and the legal right to establish, occupy, and seasonally transfer fishing rooms ultimately determined how the Newfoundland coast was to be utilized and developed. They perfected the fishing room over many decades of practical experience. Its assortment of locally-fashioned shore infrastructure provided crew accommodations, and the various structures necessary for processing cod into salt fish. The English selected overseas coastline that best served

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<sup>11</sup> Innis 1978: 11

<sup>12</sup> "Exploitation of the northern staples of codfish and furs, rather than agriculture, dominated the early Canadian economy. Along the barren Atlantic coasts and deep in the northern interior, European merchant capital was invested in the cod fishery and fur trade." Hornsby 1992: xxii

<sup>13</sup> Templeman: 1966

<sup>14</sup> Templeman, 1966; See also Innis, 1978



their large-scale commercial fishery requirements<sup>15</sup>, and secured traditional *usufruct* rights for their network of fishing rooms that were subsequently protected by the English government<sup>16</sup>.

The English migratory fishery, along with failed colonization attempts instigated during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was directly responsible for introducing a number of skilled fishermen and labourers to the Newfoundland coast. This unsanctioned population formed the nucleus for the island's emerging sedentary population who competed alongside migratory fishermen for shore space and fishery revenue. Sedentary fishermen wisely chose to replicate the fishing room, a trusted and reliable land use template, to secure their share of the overseas salt fish trade (see Images 1.2 and 1.3). These fishing rooms were further modified to provide homesteading and subsistence agricultural opportunities for local fishermen along with their families and dependents. With the introduction of English land policy to Newfoundland in 1699, fishing rooms became the only type of private property recognized under English common law.

**The fishing room was a major element in shaping Newfoundland's coastal cultural landscape, and this thesis explores its evolution from a seasonal common property land use system managed by English migratory fishermen, into a form of real property that would substantially define Newfoundland coastal settlement.**

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<sup>15</sup> Innis, 1978; See also Lounsbury, 1969

<sup>16</sup> "The diverse colonies and territories which comprised the first British Empire never adhered to any uniform mode of development; the decentralized imperial system exerted a relatively low level of political control and legal cohesion over local societies; and the constitutional doctrine of customary powers figured prominently throughout America". Bannister 2003: 16

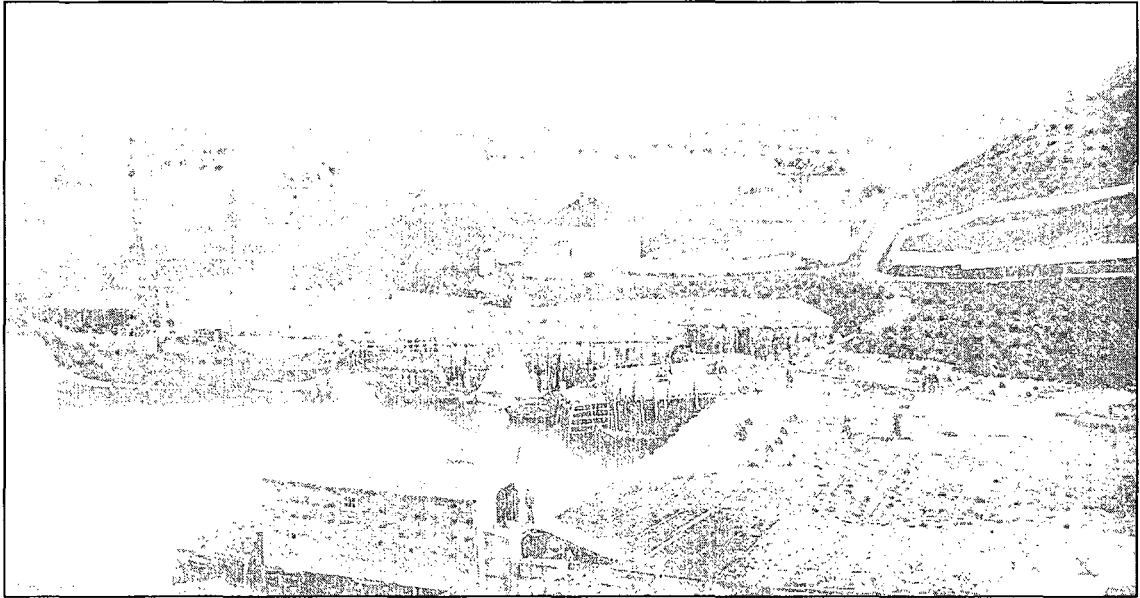


Image 1.1: The *Lady of St. John* 's Loading Salt Fish at Burin, Newfoundland in 1898<sup>17</sup>

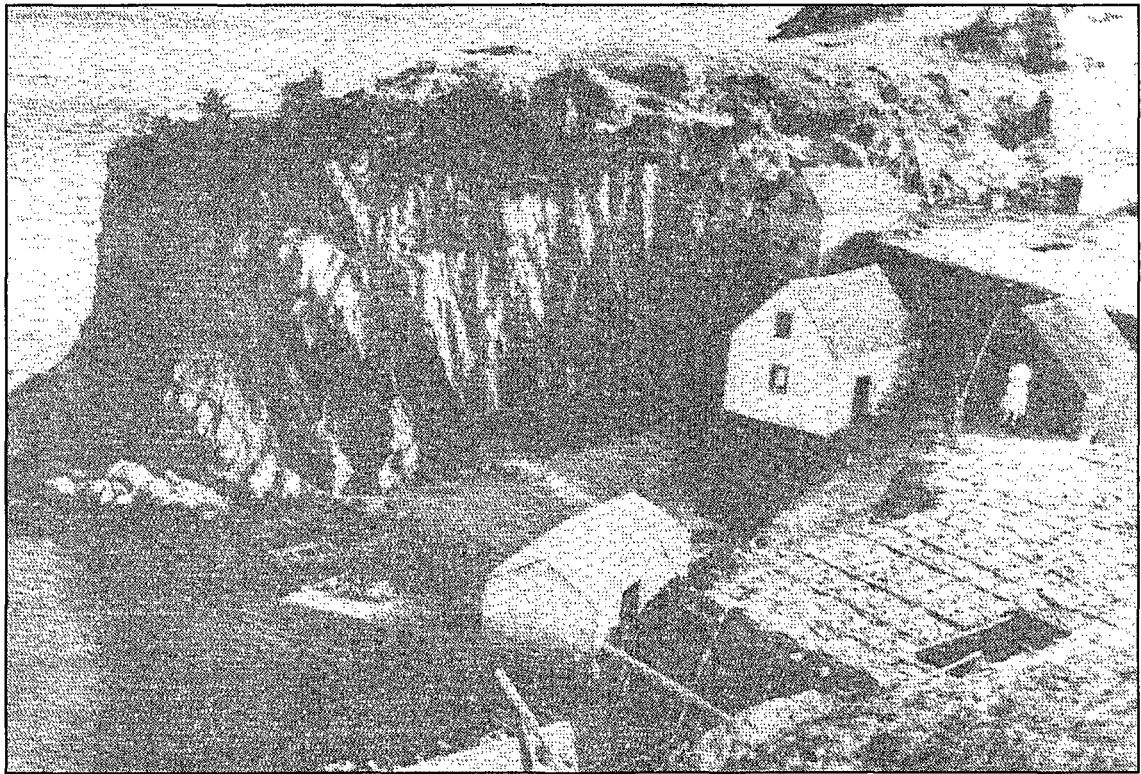


Image 1.2: The Newfoundland Fishing Room Could be Adapted to a Variety of Coastal Landscapes<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Photo by Peggy Cleave in *The New Maritime History of Devon*, vol. 2, J. Duffy ed. : 30

<sup>18</sup> Gordon King Collection in Ryan 1986: 340

## 1.1: FISHING ROOM DESCRIPTION

The fishing room is described in the Dictionary of Newfoundland English (second edition) as “**a tract or parcel of land** [my emphasis] on the waterfront of a cove or harbour from which a fishery is conducted; the stores, sheds, flakes, wharves and other facilities where the catch is landed and processed, and the crew housed”<sup>19</sup>. This is a generic term referring to the space, or *room*, selected to contain seasonal crew accommodations and large-scale fish-processing activities of varying scale (Images 2.6 and 2.7). Fishing rooms could be adapted to a variety of coastal landscapes, but initially were established primarily along Newfoundland’s south-east coast. English inshore fisheries exploited discrete cod stocks that migrated inshore from offshore banks to the Newfoundland coast during spring and summer. Fishing grounds were harvested using rudimentary hook-and-line technology from small fishing boats (*shallops*) that travelled to and from the local fishing grounds on a daily basis. The English salt-processed their cod catches using an intensive dry-cure regimen in which individual fish were carefully husbanded over a period of about seven days. Reliance upon this *English Cure* process meant that fishing rooms needed enough space to contain a number of fish drying frames (*flakes*<sup>20</sup>) which could accommodate cod landings in the varying stages of drying. So, the amount of space required for an English fishing room was determined in relation to the number of shallops transported aboard the ship, and in proportion to the average size of cod landings delivered incrementally to shore for dry-processing. Fishing room selection criteria forged a tangible linkage between inshore cod fishing ground distributions, and

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<sup>19</sup> Dictionary of Newfoundland English 1982: 184

<sup>20</sup> “A Flake is a Horizontal Platform, supported by upright posts, upon which the Fish is spread out to be dried. The surface is of Brush-wood, laid so smoothly and regularly that the Fish can be spread upon it with Ease.” Buchanan 1786: 1 (notes)

shore positions situated conveniently for their commercial exploitation. It played a vital role in the spatial distribution of 16<sup>th</sup> century Newfoundland fisheries, and later of a sedentary population that would emerge during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The fishing room, in all of its myriad forms and appearances, represented an iconic and formative element in the creation of Newfoundland's cultural landscape. An exploration of English fish-processing methods, land allocation systems, and changing English policies at Newfoundland will reveal how fishing rooms evolved to serve the needs of both migratory fishermen and sedentary populations. An exploration of English fish-processing methods and land allocation systems reveal how fishing rooms developed to serve the needs of both migratory fishery enterprise, and those of an emerging sedentary population of salt fish producers. I have selected the fishing room to trace the evolution of common property land use from European seasonal fishing stations into a form of private property that could support and perpetuate Newfoundland settlement.

My main area of interest concerns the incorporation of the English fishing room design into the cultural fabric of Newfoundland society, and its impact upon the spatial organization of coastal communities. This study examines the fishing room's introduction to the Newfoundland coast, its adaptation into a diversity of coastal landscapes, and overall suitability to support both English shore fishery activity and settlement.

Ultimately, fishing room design provided a template for Newfoundland *outport* settlement that promoted the shared experiences, and community interconnectedness that might, perhaps, be best appreciated under Vidal de la Blache's "genre de vie" concept:

Collective human organization for the purposes of producing and sustaining social, economic and religious life within a specified geographical setting is

regarded as foundational for an integrated set of environmental, cultural, and spiritual practices.<sup>21</sup>

Certainly, no study of Newfoundland history or settlement can be complete without some appreciation for its principal element.

This research relies upon many sources, both modern and historical, to examine the Newfoundland fishing room. This thesis encompasses a period beginning with Newfoundland's discovery in 1497 through to 1805, and traces the evolution of the fishing room from that of temporary fishing base for migratory fishermen, through its status as real property for sedentary fishermen, to its expansion into the Bonavista Bay frontier where it formed the basis for English settlement.

The body of the thesis comprises seven chapters. Chapter 2 is a literature review in which the fishing room is placed within the wider scope of contemporary academic research. Chapter 3 covers the initial exploration of the Newfoundland's physical and marine landscapes by continental European fishermen, and describes how shore-based English migratory fisheries were instrumental in the area's coastal land use development. Schematic diagrams are included to depict a generic land use strategy employed in early English fisheries. Chapter 4 examines the growth of an unregulated inhabitant population to the Newfoundland coast, and how the imposition of English charters and acts affected the distribution and growth of these sedentary salt fish producers. Chapter 5 concerns the impacts of English property law on international treaties upon Newfoundland fishing rooms. The introduction of English property law involved a redefinition of fishing room proprietary rights between migratory and sedentary fishermen, and played a vital role in

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<sup>21</sup> "Literally translated as 'mode of life', or lifeway, refers to the connected forms of livelihood functionally characteristic of a human group, for example, *transhumant fishing communities* [my emphasis] or peasant agriculturalists." Johnston 2004: 294

the spatial organization of Newfoundland settlement. Through a study of 17<sup>th</sup> century English charters and acts, we explore the struggle between migratory and sedentary fishermen at Newfoundland as they attempt to gain control over their respective fishing rooms. Chapter 6 contains a field study and historical geographical examination of Bonavista Bay using *The Register of Fishing Rooms for Bonavista Bay, (1805-1806)*<sup>22</sup>. The register provides a reasonably accurate, contemporary field study of 18<sup>th</sup> century Bonavista Bay settlement that has been used to recreate the spatial organization of several local fishing communities. Schematic representations of fishing rooms depicting the nature of property claim and type of fishery enterprise help us understand how 18<sup>th</sup> century fishing communities were organized. An examination of fishing room ownership offers a glimpse of how property law was utilized to secure control over the best commercial areas of the Bonavista Bay coastline. Chapter 7 contains my conclusion, and brings the Newfoundland fishing room into a modern context. Chapter 8 contains my transcription of the Register of Fishing Rooms for Bonavista Bay, and tabular information regarding the nature of property claim and type of enterprise for each of the 91 fishing rooms described.

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<sup>22</sup> Register of Fishing Rooms for Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador

## **CHAPTER 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1: INTRODUCTION**

This thesis examines the changing role of the fishing room from its origin as a temporary English fishery base into a form of *real property* which enabled growing sedentary populations to establish homesteads and to participate in the transatlantic salt fish trade. Surprisingly, most historical authors rarely devote anything more than partial attention to the fishing room, yet it became a crucial iconic element in forming Newfoundland's cultural landscape. As a result, I have relied upon many sources, both historical and modern, to research the fishing room from its migratory fishery origins, to its adoption by English sedentary fish producers who accepted it as a viable land use for settlement that has survived, at least vestigially, into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **2.2: NEWFOUNDLAND'S PHYSICAL AND UNDERSEA ENVIRONMENTS**

Newfoundland's physical and marine environments are described in detail in the Atlas of Newfoundland and Labrador, the work by Macpherson and Macpherson, and Templeman<sup>1</sup>. European migratory fishermen had to develop a keen appreciation of Newfoundland environments in order to maintain a consistently profitable enterprise<sup>2</sup>.

Head's historical geographical examination explored the transformation of Newfoundland's coastline from a series of seasonally occupied fishery stations into viable fishing communities where emergent, sedentary English populations could exist by fashioning life strategies centred on the cod fishery. Head, like Innis, understood the vital role played by the seasonal distributions of inshore cod in Newfoundland's economic and

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<sup>1</sup> The Atlas of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1991; See also Macpherson, et. al., 1981; Templeman, 1966

<sup>2</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1, 1998: Plates 21-23, 25, 28

cultural development. Both authors devoted considerable attention to both the biophysical coastal environment, and the behavioural characteristics of Atlantic cod during their annual in-migration periods. Templeman explained that cod were usually taken on the east coast of Newfoundland, and especially off peninsular headlands or near offshore islands found near underwater shelves<sup>3</sup>. Both Head and Templeman mapped hypothesized inshore cod distributions to reveal a clear association between inshore fishing grounds and the locations of fishing harbours<sup>4</sup>. Innis's book includes information on seasonal catch rates which I have used to reconstruct a hypothetical English fishing room<sup>5</sup>. As Head observed, "Various specific locational factors were operative in the placement of Newfoundland fishing stations that developed into year-round settlements"<sup>6</sup>.

Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula (see Map 1.1) offered the most lucrative coastline for fishing room establishment due to its numerous and relatively ice-free harbours, and close proximity to abundant offshore banks<sup>7</sup>. The distribution of inshore cod fishing grounds around the coast played an important role in the spatial organization of fishing rooms and, therefore, of human settlement in Newfoundland<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Templeman 1966: 37-38, 52; See also Innis 1978; 1954

<sup>4</sup> Head 1976: 7, 12, 24, 55, 64, 144, 154, 160, 167, 170, 178; See also Templeman 1966: 38; Story 1997: 2

<sup>5</sup> Innis 1978: 106-107

<sup>6</sup> Head 1976: 181

<sup>7</sup> Atlas of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1991; See also Farmer, 1981; Banfield, 1981; Macpherson, 1981

<sup>8</sup> "There are certain areas that are particularly favoured, such as Fogo, Bonavista, the Bay de Verde peninsula, and Cape St. Frances. There are also areas where grounds are sparse or lacking, such as the eastern shore of Conception Bay and the southern and eastern shores of Trinity Bay". Head 1976: 23, 19-25



### 2.3: LAND USE AND SETTLEMENT ANTECEDENTS IN ENGLAND

A search for the possible origins of the Newfoundland fishing room ought perhaps to look at the type of fishing villages existing in south-western England prior to the inception of the English migratory fishery (see Images 2.1 and 2.2). Harold Fox has examined the so-called medieval *cellar settlements* of South Devon, and explores their evolution from sites which hosted a variety of seasonal, by-employment opportunities for farm labourers (see Image 2.1) into late-15<sup>th</sup> century fishing villages that would provide homes and economic opportunities for a rising population. Cellar settlements were subordinate coastal settlements, detached from the inland agricultural ‘villages’, and they were often little more than “a close knit disarrangement of buildings, densely packed together, with no hint of a planned, orderly shape”<sup>9</sup>.

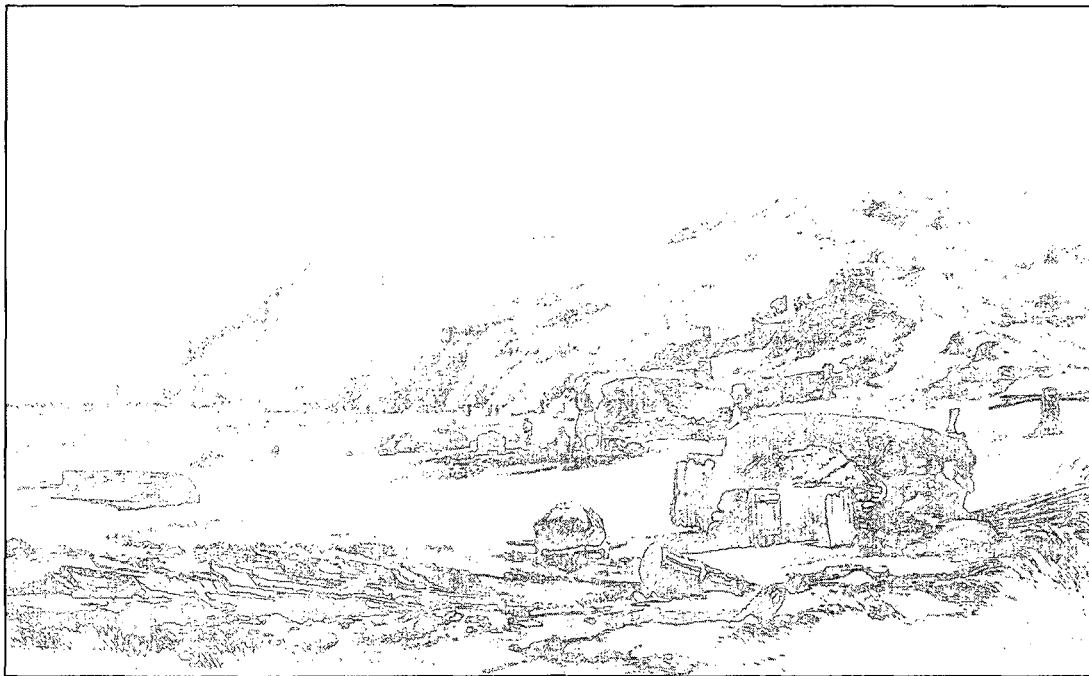


Image 2.1: Barrepta, Carbis Bay, Cornwall from a drawing by E. W. Cooke, 1848<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Fox 2001: 133-134

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 108

Fox's work is significant because it broadly illustrates the settlement morphology of a significant area of Newfoundland's migrant origins during a formative period of north Atlantic discovery and trade. But it strongly suggests that the evolved Newfoundland fishing room was more the product of commercial necessity than of traditional, *vernacular* origin as Pope contends<sup>11</sup>. English fishing villages were never designed to accommodate large-scale, labour intensive fishery activities, nor could they adequately contain the large-scale salt fish processing activity, especially the air drying of cod fish, necessary to serve foreign export markets.

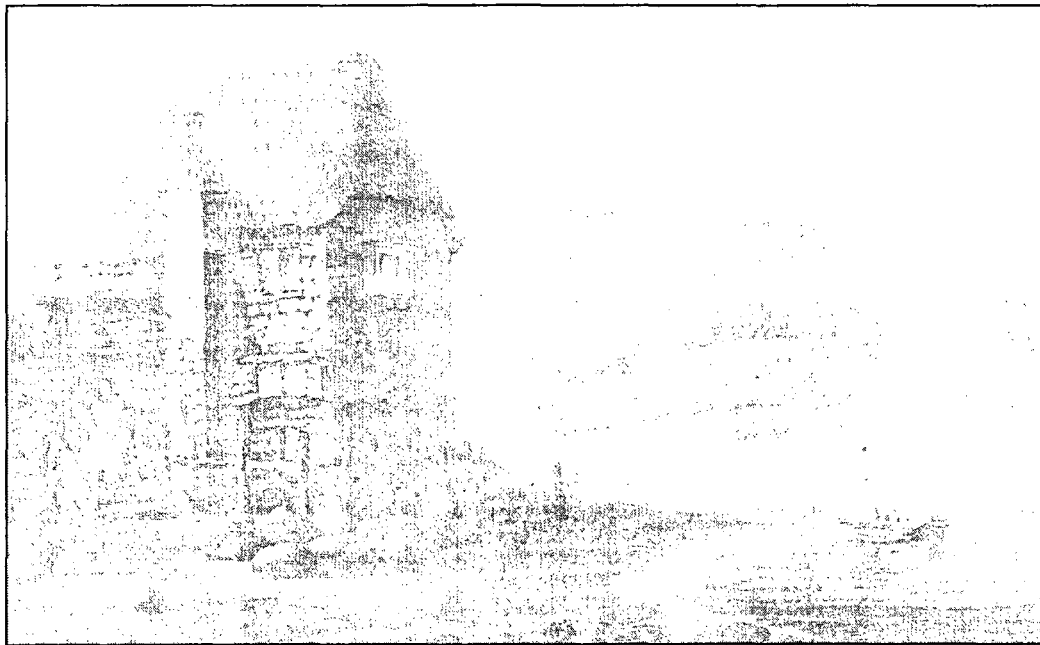


Image 2.2: Coombe Cellars on Sidmouth Beach from a watercolour by John Sweete, 1795<sup>12</sup>

In sharp contrast to the English cellar settlement, the Newfoundland fishing room represented a specialized land use system that promoted the efficient commercial

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<sup>11</sup> Pope 2004: 414

<sup>12</sup> Fox 2001: 107

extraction and dry-processing of Atlantic cod. The incorporation of this land use design into southeast Newfoundland's coastal landscape involved exacting selection criteria that balanced aspects of the physical, biological and marine landscapes. Pocius has written extensively about the Newfoundland fishing *stage*<sup>13</sup> (see Image 2.3), and describes in detail its English origin and vernacular agricultural roots<sup>14</sup>. He suggests that stage construction involved a modification of traditional building techniques to suit migratory fishery harvesting and dry-processing requirements. This study, however, concentrates solely upon the fishing stage, and fails to consider the Newfoundland fishing room as a whole. While Pocius quite rightly suggests that the English transported mobile "harvesting and dry-processing factories" to Newfoundland shores, he considers this strictly as an 18<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon. A fishing room's primary function, therefore, was to define a parcel of shoreline where inshore fishery activities could be accommodated.

In their case study of Virginia settlement, Mitchell and Hofstra note that "Coastal landscapes created during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had no precedent in Western Europe because they were associated with plantation-based economies and societies *unique to the Americas* [my emphasis]"<sup>15</sup>. It is extremely unlikely that the Newfoundland fishing room, with its unique assortment of shore infrastructure and commercial production capacity, represented the cultural transfer of an existing European land use system. The fishing rooms enabled English fishermen to employ an adaptation

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<sup>13</sup> "A Stage is a long and narrow Building projecting into the water, where the Fish, when taken out of the Boats, is headed, splitted, and salted. The sides and ends are composed of upright posts interwoven (or wattled) with Brush-wood, laid so smoothly and regularly that the fish can be spread upon it with Ease". Buchanan 1786: 1 (notes)

<sup>14</sup> Pocius 1990: 12, 6

<sup>15</sup> Mitchell and Hofstra 1995: 141

of an innovative, Scandinavian fish processing method that differed markedly from the land use system evidenced in late medieval English fishing villages (see Image 2.3). Nevertheless, Devon cellar settlements as, in origin, rudimentary seasonal accommodation for locally migrant fisheries, may be seen as at least a vestigial foreshadowing of the later evolved fishing room complexes of a Newfoundland English Shore industrial nexus.

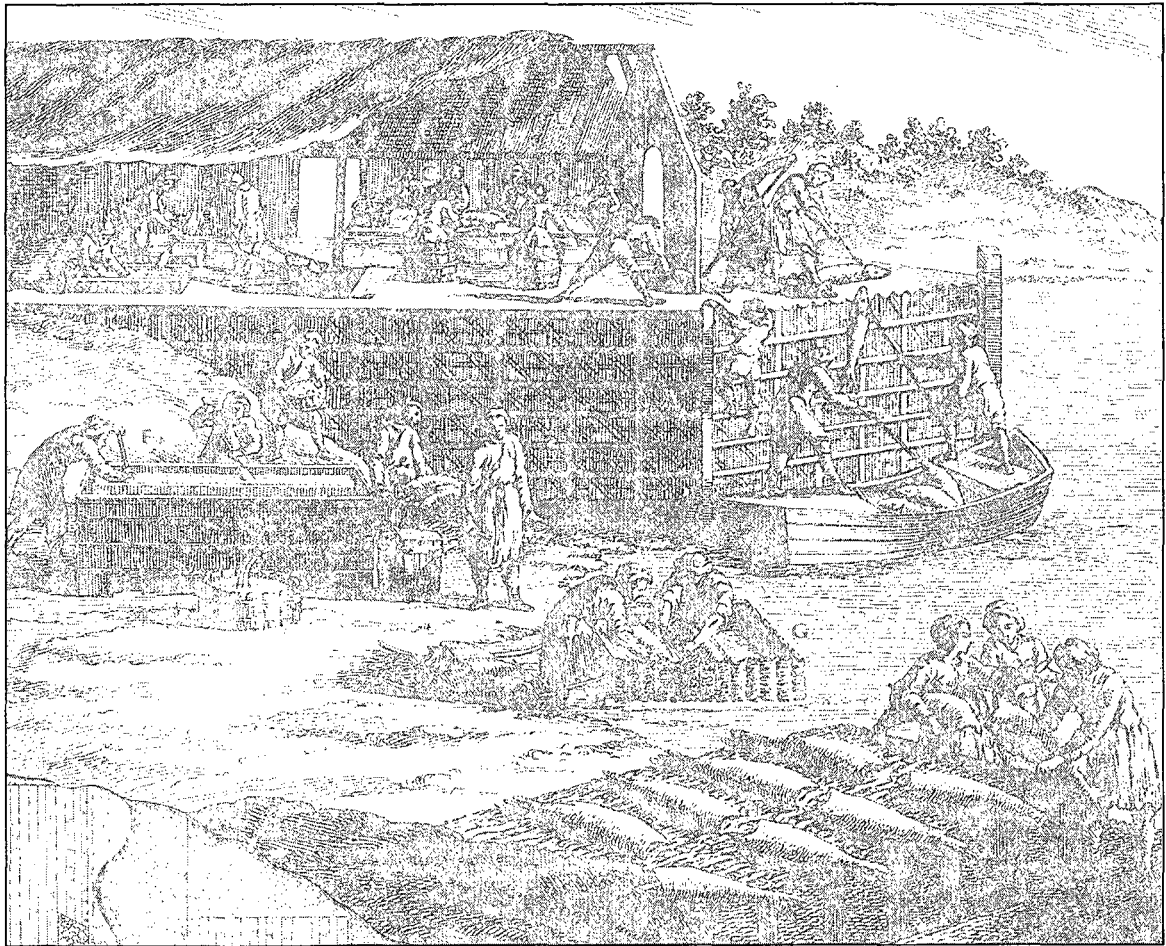


Image 2.3: “Processing Cod at the Stage”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Duhamel du Monceau, 1772, Modified from de Fer, 1698 in the Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: Plate 21

## 2.4: NEWFOUNDLAND'S CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Mannion's work offers a comprehensive treatment of Newfoundland's cultural environment<sup>17</sup>. Newfoundland settlement origins can be traced to the practice of English migratory captains leaving wintering crews to maintain possession of fishing rooms (and shore positions) for the ship until the following year<sup>18</sup>. Anspach suggested that these men did not agree to over-winter at Newfoundland *by choice*, and that "no master [of a fishing ship] ever kept more winter-servants than the occasion of his situation compelled him to do so, is a confirmation of his situation of the state of wretchedness to which servants were then reduced"<sup>19</sup>. Head adds that "West of England merchants found it advantageous to leave their shore installations and a small party of watchmen over the winter in Newfoundland and to utilize the extra cargo space for fish".<sup>20</sup> Whatever the case, English fishermen routinely disembarked wintering crews at Newfoundland to protect their fishing rooms and stored equipment until the following fishing year. There is, however, some dispute as to when over-wintering began in Newfoundland, but this life strategy would become increasingly important for the emerging English sedentary population.

Handcock has contributed a seminal work on population migration between England's West Country ports and the Newfoundland coast. He explains the significant contribution made by the English migratory fishermen and merchants to the introduction and growth of the Newfoundland's sedentary population<sup>21</sup>. The fishery generally

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<sup>17</sup> Mannion, 1977

<sup>18</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1, 1998: Plate 25; See also Story 1997: 3

<sup>19</sup> Anspach 1819: 180

<sup>20</sup> Head 1964: 7; See also Smith, 1987

<sup>21</sup> Handcock 1989: 14; See also Hornsby 1992: 5-7; Janzen 1987: 19; Pope 2004: 144-145, 147

attracted young single men as participants in its seasonal fisheries. Mannion describes these labourers as “displaced artisans or their sons” who faced increasing unemployment during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He adds that “. . . some drifted into seasonal farm work in nearby counties, some moved to the industrial midlands, and still others emigrated [to Newfoundland]”<sup>22</sup> .

According to Mitchell and Hofstra, a settlement system can be defined as “the totality of sites, structures, and routes of human activity organized across a territory and shaped by environmental, social, and economic processes and, in colonial contexts, also by political and ideological imperatives”<sup>23</sup>. The authors explore various theories to describe the evolution of 18<sup>th</sup> century Virginia settlement, but find that current theories do not adequately explain the situation. Similarly, a comprehensive study of Newfoundland settlement requires an incorporation of several theoretical approaches. James Vance’s model suggests that settlement formation directed from outside the system could be achieved using “points of attachment for English mercantile activity along the Atlantic coast”<sup>24</sup>. This theory predicts the emergence of trade *entrepôts* along the Newfoundland coast, and further explains that merchant credit “was critical in maintaining these long-distance ties”. Handcock agrees that the establishment of locally-based merchant firms played a vital role in the expansion of Newfoundland settlement, especially during the 18<sup>th</sup> century when they began to service a growing sedentary

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<sup>22</sup> Mannion 1977: 9

<sup>23</sup> Mitchell, et. al., 1995: 124, 129, 138-139

<sup>24</sup> Mitchell, 1995

population<sup>25</sup>. Mannion suggests that the long distances and significant costs associated with migratory enterprise meant that the Newfoundland salt fish trade was understandably under the control of West Country merchants rather than private individuals<sup>26</sup>. This phenomenon is, perhaps, even more marked in the cognate fishery described by Hornsby for Cape Breton<sup>27</sup>.

## **2.5: EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT SYSTEMS**

The cultural landscape of North America has been shaped in large part by a variety of systems of land division usually derived from, or imposed by, European antecedents and agents. For a detailed examination of settlement systems, the Historical Atlas of Canada edited by Cole Harris is particularly useful<sup>28</sup>. The prairie township and section, Ontario's township and concession system, and Quebec's seigneurial system, for example, represent introduced European notions that shaped Canada's cultural landscapes. In most cases, the implantation of these systems involved the imposition of agricultural land use designs arbitrarily and durably upon an uninhabited landscape: writing of southern Ontario's landscape, for example, McIlwraith remarks that the original survey grid is the "only component of landscape not to have undergone a facelift"<sup>29</sup>. While contemporary Canadian cultural landscapes have, unarguably, been significantly altered by the adoption of modern lifestyles and building techniques, a

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<sup>25</sup> Handcock 1989: 219-221

<sup>26</sup> Mannion 1977: 8

<sup>27</sup> Hornsby 1992: 4-15, 85-95, 153-169

<sup>28</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. I, 1998: Plates 21, 29, 40, 51-52, 62, 64

<sup>29</sup> McIlwraith 1997: 330

palimpsest of original land use and settlement systems still survives for those with a trained eye. The same can be said of Newfoundland's fishing communities which formerly shared a strong traditional connection to the sea and the inshore cod fishery.

The value of the entire Canadian fur trade (based on a variety of species such as beaver, buffalo, mink, etc.) in 1869 was estimated at £170,000, sterling<sup>30</sup>. Lounsbury uses a number of estimates for the Newfoundland cod fishery for the period 1738 to 1753 which range between £278,000 and £470,000, sterling, respectively. By comparison, the Newfoundland cod fishery returned between two and three times the revenue of the fur trade, yet its significance within the framework of Canadian historical geographical research has too frequently been overlooked.

Thus, although Canada's Atlantic fisheries have for centuries been a vital springboard for development- clearly persistently exceeding in economic value the more iconic fur trade- they have not usually been accorded equal treatment from historical geographers. A major work by Gibson, for example, though admittedly a selective festschrift, makes no mention of the fishery in 231 pages<sup>31</sup>. A review of a number of cogent North American case studies is warranted in an effort to place the Newfoundland fishing room into the proper historical and academic context.

The French *seigneurie* provided *habitant* settlers a plot of riverside land, or *long lot*, of suitable size to support homesteading and subsistence agricultural activity provided it was properly cleared and worked<sup>32</sup>. The seigneurial system, however, eventually

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<sup>30</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. II, 1998: Plate 17

<sup>31</sup> Gibson, 1978

<sup>32</sup> Harris 1984: 196-198; 139



disintegrated in pre-conquest Quebec owing to excessive interference by the French Crown, and because local authorities were unwilling or unable to impose foreign regulations. It was, however, revived and strengthened after the inhabitant population grew and land became scarcer following the 1763 conquest, not least as a distinct French icon in the face of a new English over-lordship.

Butzer's examination of Acadian wetland agriculture in the 18<sup>th</sup> century introduces an important point regarding cultural diffusion between France and Nova Scotia<sup>33</sup>. This study illustrates that the imposition of French law and agricultural techniques was not always acceptable to Canadian settlers who often shared a stronger cultural association to their adopted environments than to their European homeland. Similarly, a fishing room template that was perfected by migratory fishermen to accommodate mobile commercial operations of varying sizes and scales reflected a viable land use strategy without precedent in the 16<sup>th</sup> century English fishing village. Initially, Canada's immigrant populations shared a close cultural association with their European heritage, but such bonds generally eroded as settlers formulated survival strategies attuned to new environmental realities<sup>34</sup>. Harris suggests that the distinctive pattern of early Canadian settlement was "bedded in the particular configuration of its emerging human geography" which, in turn, was defined in relation to specific biophysical environments<sup>35</sup>. McIlwraith further explains that original settlement systems evolved naturally to answer the changing needs of local populations<sup>36</sup>. In Newfoundland, traces of coastal settlements based on the

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<sup>33</sup> Butzer, 2002; See also Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. I, 1989: Plate 29

<sup>34</sup> Harris, 1984; 1990; See also Mannion, 1974; Wynn, 1990

<sup>35</sup> Harris 1990: 358

<sup>36</sup> McIlwraith, 1997

fishing room design currently survive on the landscape, provided we have sufficient knowledge and interest to discover them.

Perhaps the fishing room design merely reflected a practical land use strategy that was developed by English fishermen in order to maximize overseas cod fishery revenues. As the Newfoundland coast was not initially subjected to either a European or indigenous territorial claim, fishing rooms were situated wherever inshore fishery activity could be conducted efficiently and profitably. Inshore harvesting and dry-processing technologies were undeniably European, but their practical application to foreign shores demanded a thorough knowledge of local coastal and marine environments to ensure commercial success. As Mannion comments, “We cannot ignore the ingenuity of settlers who embraced profit using knowledge and technology originating both within and outside the study area, or were based on homeland experience”<sup>37</sup>.

Hornsby’s examination of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Cape Breton traces the introduction of English inshore fisheries following the French withdrawal in 1758. He describes a situation closely resembling that of Newfoundland<sup>38</sup>, and emphasizes the industrial work routine on ‘fishing stations’, but does not specifically mention the fishing room. This study concentrates upon social stratification between merchants, planters, and sundry fish labourers within the fishing community. Hornsby begins his examination with the expansion of English merchant firms, more particularly originating in the Channel Islands, into Cape Breton during the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. “British merchant capital had created a few highly specialized settlements around the coast that were overwhelmingly

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<sup>37</sup> Mannion 1974: 171

<sup>38</sup> Hornsby 1992: 4-15, 28-29

dependent upon the cod fishery, and the ebb and flow of international trade”. Hornsby understands the distinctiveness of the outport fishing community, and that “the stratified world of the outports was far removed from the essentially egalitarian communities of the farm settlements”<sup>39</sup>. Mannion echoes these sentiments, and attributes the uniqueness of Newfoundland’s cultural landscape not only to its geographic isolation from England, but also to its “historical isolation from the Canadian mainland”<sup>40</sup>. As Story comments, “They were communities on a human scale and societies with a conscience, or an illusion, of mastery over their environment”<sup>41</sup>.

## **2.6: PROPERTY LAW AND 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY ANGLO-FRENCH TREATIES**

The English government exercised great care in preserving Newfoundland as a seasonal base for its lucrative migratory fishery interests, and skilfully formulated its legal policy to ensure its salt fish trade was conducted as efficiently and profitably as possible. The migratory fishery’s access to a network of fishing rooms was of great importance as it established England’s territorial right to access Newfoundland coastline. Gaining exclusive property rights over arguably the most lucrative harbour positions of south-eastern Newfoundland enabled English fishermen to establish a monopoly interest in the trans-Atlantic salt fish industry. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the English government resisted the introduction of permanent settlement as long as possible. The cod fishery was the sole commercial industry that operated only three or four months per

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<sup>39</sup> See Hornsby, 1992

<sup>40</sup> Mannion 1977: 2

<sup>41</sup> Story 1997: 20

year, so there was no commercial justification to support year-round habitation at Newfoundland. Secondly, during the off-season, Newfoundland shores were virtually abandoned, and there were no institutions in place to enforce English law and order. It is quite possible that English government was unwilling to recognize a settled population at Newfoundland because it wanted to preserve its substantial commercial interests in the migratory fishery, and revenue generated by the trans-Atlantic salt fish trade.

Keith Matthews' study of Newfoundland constitutional law includes a collection of 17<sup>th</sup> century Newfoundland Charters and Acts, and commentary regarding their impact upon the seasonal occupation and ownership of fishing rooms<sup>42</sup>. These documents reflected England's official policy for governing its commercial interests in the Newfoundland fishery. Through the Western Charters (1633, 1670), England granted its migratory fishermen exclusive seasonal rights to occupy a network of English Shore fishing rooms for which they had established a traditional, usufruct claim. The Newfoundland Act (1699) reaffirmed control over the most lucrative fishing rooms for its migratory fishery, but offered an opportunity for local sedentary fishermen, who had established themselves illegally at Newfoundland harbours, to secure provisional property rights for fishing rooms that were established and maintained as fishing premises. While such laws provided the legal framework for migratory fisheries at Newfoundland, the English government did not install the type of permanent institutions necessary to protect the rights of sedentary fishermen.

The English Government realized that control of the inshore fishery, and indeed the overseas salt fish trade, began with control over the fishing rooms. The network of

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<sup>42</sup> Matthews, 1975

English Shore fishing rooms, claimed either under seasonal usufruct right or secured by local fishermen after a suitable tenure claim period, established an exclusive sovereign territorial claim for England. Fishing room property rights also gave English fishermen an opportunity to gain control of coastal land and fisheries outside the English Shore, and in areas where French migratory fisheries were active. Mitchell and Hofstra state that land policy “was the key to both the formation and timing of pioneer settlement systems”, but at Newfoundland, the fishing room organized inshore fisheries long before settlement was introduced<sup>43</sup>. In fact, English settlements could not have survived without a land use strategy that was adapted to support overseas fishery activity.

Prior to 1550, the Newfoundland coast hosted migratory fishermen from several European areas. Fishermen who engaged in the inshore fishery routinely competed for shore space in the most productive fishing harbours where they established infrastructure necessary for dry-processing activities. In lieu of any extant sovereign claim, fishermen converged on the coast of Newfoundland each year to occupy the best coastal position they could find. Allocations of *common property* shoreline were chosen for their suitability to accommodate the type and scale of harvesting demanded by these fishermen. But managing coastal access effectively such that the English salt fish trade operated profitably involved the implementation and management of coastal access by migratory fishermen themselves. The English Crown devised a series of Charters and Acts that would codify the seasonal allocations of fishing rooms for migratory fishermen. These regulations, which came to be known as the *fishing admiralty system*, represented a

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<sup>43</sup> Mitchell: 1995; See also Wonders: 1982.

seasonal, usufruct land use strategy that was managed in practice by English ship captains. Bannister writes:

The island's legal system drew together written and unwritten sources of law: prerogative writ, statute, common law, and local custom. Eighteenth century courts relied upon an amalgam of customary practices and legal regulations that mutually reinforced a single legal regime<sup>44</sup>.

Of this early period, Anspach wrote that "the space of ground [fishing room] requisite to cure and dry cod-fish belonged to the first person who seized upon it", but admitted that this custom was "a perpetual source of disputes"<sup>45</sup>. Matthews suggested that, in this open-access fishery environment, fishing room possession sometimes involved conflict between ships (or nations), but there was not, in fact, a legal framework in place to settle shore access issues<sup>46</sup>. It was only beginning in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century that England's rising prominence in Europe and their developing system of fisheries management enabled them to take control over an area of south-eastern Newfoundland that would become the *English Shore* (See Map 2.1).

It is interesting to note that areas of coastal Newfoundland hosted fishermen hailing from specific areas of England. Conducting a consistently profitable migratory fishery began with an appreciation of local environments that required considerable time and practical experience to accumulate. Perhaps this explains why Newfoundland fishing harbours regularly hosted fishermen from the same English regions (Map 2.1)<sup>47</sup>.

Anspach's history of Newfoundland describes two late-16<sup>th</sup> century Newfoundland voyages (Hampshire 1582, Gilbert 1583) in which an undetermined number of fishing

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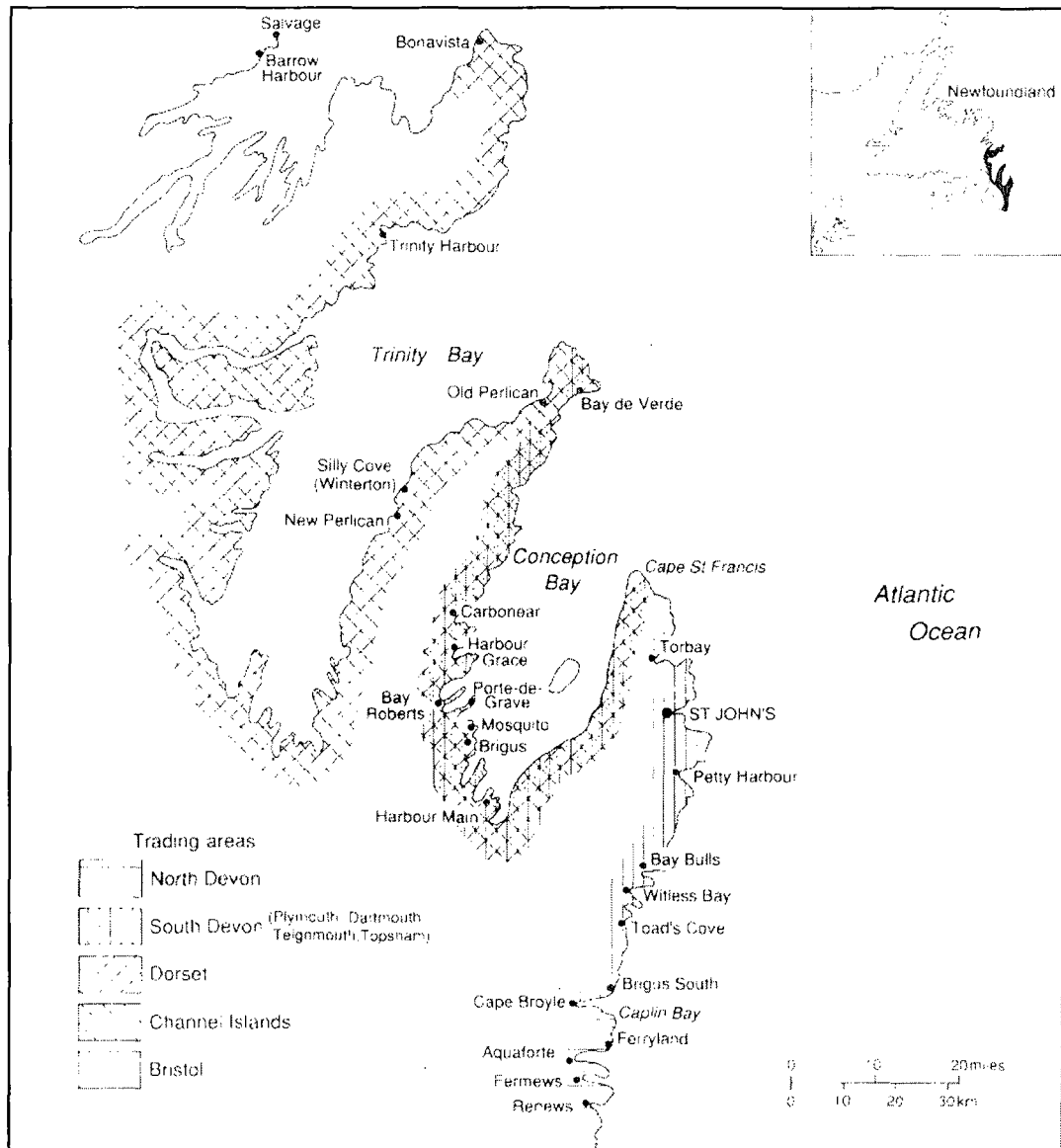
<sup>44</sup> Bannister 2003: 283

<sup>45</sup> Anspach 1819: 59

<sup>46</sup> Matthews 1988: 49, 64-65

<sup>47</sup> Handcock 1989: 273, 151

rooms were granted conditionally to English captains “which gave confidence and security to the parties concerned in the fishery”<sup>48</sup>. While information concerning these royally-sanctioned land grants is not presently available, Anspach tells us that under this new arrangement the English fishing expeditions to Newfoundland were “considerably increased”.



Map 2.1: The English Shore of Newfoundland in the Late Seventeenth Century<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Anspach 1819: 60, 65, 85

Bannister has rejected the longstanding attitude held by many scholars that Newfoundland's governance under the fishing admirals was "by its very nature inherently primitive and lawless"<sup>50</sup>. While admitting, and describing cogently, the tangle of common and statute law which had variously affected the fishery evolution he pointed to the prescription of Buchanan as being a critical definition in nature and time; "Archibald Buchanan captured the essential point:

The property in land, thus established, may be conveyed to heirs, may be devised by will, may be disposed of by sale, may be let to tenants, may be adjudged to creditors in payment of debt- but it must, in all cases be employed, as the [Newfoundland] Act directs, in the business of the fishery<sup>51</sup>.

Buchanan wrote in 1786, and we can infer that by this date the notion of the ships' room long recognized as common property, had faded into the shadows. The emerging and dominant replacement was the fishing room, held as private property either by an individual or a corporation.

By the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, the struggle between migratory and sedentary fishermen for possession of English Shore fishing rooms had become intense. Crowding in the area's core harbours reduced fishery opportunities for all concerned. Anglo-French war, a frequent occurrence in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, effectively disrupted overseas trade, but provided independent fishermen with an opportunity to extend their commercial activity outside the English Shore, and into areas for which French fishermen enjoyed an exclusive territorial right. Bonavista Bay, situated immediately north of the English

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<sup>49</sup> Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society, in *The New Maritime History of Devon*, vol. 1: 167, borrowed and re-drafted from Keith Matthews 1988: 190

<sup>50</sup> Bannister 2003: 280

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 124



Shore, offered sedentary fishermen a chance to explore a variety of commercial activities whenever French fishermen were delayed, or failed to arrive at Newfoundland.

## **2.7: BONAVIDA BAY SETTLEMENT, 1805**

Up to the late-18<sup>th</sup> century, Bonavista Bay hosted both French and English fisheries. A series of late-17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-French treaties were used to define their respective fishery zones, although whether these rights were to be exclusive or concurrent was often in dispute<sup>52</sup>. Hiller stated that, “the future of Newfoundland and its fisheries was inextricably linked to that of Acadia and Cape Breton”, and thus of crucial economic importance to each nation<sup>53</sup>.

For dry fishermen who needed to process their catches on shore, control over the inshore fishery was ultimately determined by whoever claimed and occupied local fishing rooms. Since the Newfoundland Act’s institution in 1699, English sedentary fishermen were in a position to gain formal proprietary rights to their fishing rooms, whether they were located inside or outside the English Shore. Under the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), French dry fishermen lost their right to permanently occupy Newfoundland coasts, but were allowed to land and dry-process cod on shore if these sites were abandoned at the end of the fishing season. The French realized that only permanently supervised fishing rooms could be protected from unfriendly incursions, so they installed English caretakers

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<sup>52</sup> See Hamon, 1770

<sup>53</sup> Hiller 1991: 25

to supervise these sites during winter. Unfortunately, this strategy backfired, and enabled the English to gain control of Bonavista Bay fishing rooms and inshore fisheries<sup>54</sup>.

From the mid to late-17<sup>th</sup> century, a number of independent English Shore fishermen organized long-distance harvesting enterprises into Bonavista Bay. These ventures employed a labour force consisting mainly of young men, many of whom had some prior migratory fishery experience, to assume a variety of resource harvesting tasks. The English incorporated the exploitation of numerous terrestrial and marine resource assemblages into their life strategies in a similar fashion to indigenous Beothuk hunters and gatherers. Commodities such as salmon, fur, seals, and wood products (firewood, posts and rails suitable for flake construction, and locally-produced barrel staves) were of commercial value to migratory fishermen, and also to fishermen inhabiting the English Shore. As winter descended upon the Newfoundland coast, English inhabitants often chose to abandon their exposed and barren fishing rooms for more sheltered and comfortable quarters in the inner reaches of east coast bays. From the relative comfort of their *winter-houses*, settlers found firewood readily available, and they could pursue boat-building, hunt caribou, seal and other fur-bearing animals until the next fishing season commenced<sup>55</sup>.

Reliance upon a variety of by-employment opportunities contributed a measure of stability for English salt fish producers which enabled them to better withstand supply shipping interruptions, market downturns, and the uncertainties associated with fishing a naturally fluctuating inshore cod resource. Only a comprehensive survival strategy that incorporated indigenous resource knowledge, both inside and outside the English Shore,

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<sup>54</sup> Wilkshire, 1994; See also Wilkshire, 1992

<sup>55</sup> Sanger, 1981; 1977

enabled Newfoundland settlers to provide for themselves and their dependents. This comprehensive strategy allowed them to both participate in the overseas salt fish trade and to maintain ownership of their fishing rooms.

The steady growth of the sedentary population coupled with their increasing contribution to the island's salt fish industry during the 18<sup>th</sup> century signalled a shift in the overseas salt fish trade. West Country merchant firms established or purchased fishing rooms at Newfoundland upon which company agents were permanently installed. This was a very practical decision brought about by declining yields in the migratory fishery. As merchants gained hands-on experience, they were in an excellent position to secure the best fishing rooms available. In most cases, a fishing room's commercial value was determined by the scale of fishery activity it could consistently accommodate. Merchants obtained legal ownership over choice fishing rooms from which they organized Newfoundland-based ship fisheries. In effect, English merchants assumed a new role in the trans-Atlantic trade: they purchased and expedited salt fish shipments to overseas markets; and became the regional suppliers of goods and credit for local fishermen. In many cases, merchant fishing room conglomerations became overseas entrepôts where sedentary fishermen conducted trade and supply business.

Handcock writes "The most spatially and temporally diverse emigration patterns appear to have stemmed from Dorset, Somerset, and Hampshire, and these counties seem to have been the major population components helping to shape the human geography of Newfoundland outside the Avalon Peninsula"<sup>56</sup>. On the Bonavista Bay frontier, English migratory and sedentary fishermen relied upon the exploitation of a variety of regional

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<sup>56</sup> Handcock 1977: 44

resources to supplement their inshore fishery proceeds<sup>57</sup>. This was especially true during the early years of fishing room establishment when sedentary fishermen expended considerable time, effort and capital to ensure their operations rendered sufficient income to cover the cost of their yearly imported goods.

A recent study by Dwyer explores small-scale late 18<sup>th</sup> century Fogo Island, Notre Dame Bay fishery enterprises, and suggests that fishermen who had devised survival strategies that allowed them to prosper over several years “formed the core of Newfoundland settlement by remaining for extended periods, by marrying, having children, and eventually by being buried in the hills around the bay. . . It was they who named the geographical features and coves, and who learned what the area had to offer during the yearly cycle of residential life”<sup>58</sup>.

Macpherson explored the growth of settlement in Central Bonavista Bay from the late-17<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>59</sup>. Using Magistrate John Bland’s “Register of Bonavista Bay Fishing Rooms, 1806”, sundry church records, and surname analysis, Macpherson traced the pattern and process of settlement. Primary fishing settlements such as Bonavista, Bayly’s Cove, and Greenspond were shown to be source areas for subsequent population migrations into central Bonavista Bay. Macpherson identified a series of secondary fishing communities that arose from, and depended upon, trade relationships with primary, regional entrepôts such as Greenspond and Bonavista. Head agrees that, “settlement spread to the Bonavista Bay archipelago from the towns of

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<sup>57</sup> See Sanger, 1977

<sup>58</sup> Dwyer 2006: 41, 45

<sup>59</sup> Macpherson, 1977

Bonavista and Greenspond”<sup>60</sup>. King’s Cove exemplified the type of outport fishing community which produced shipments of salt fish that were traded locally for supplies and credit (see Image 2.4).

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<sup>60</sup> Head 1964:12

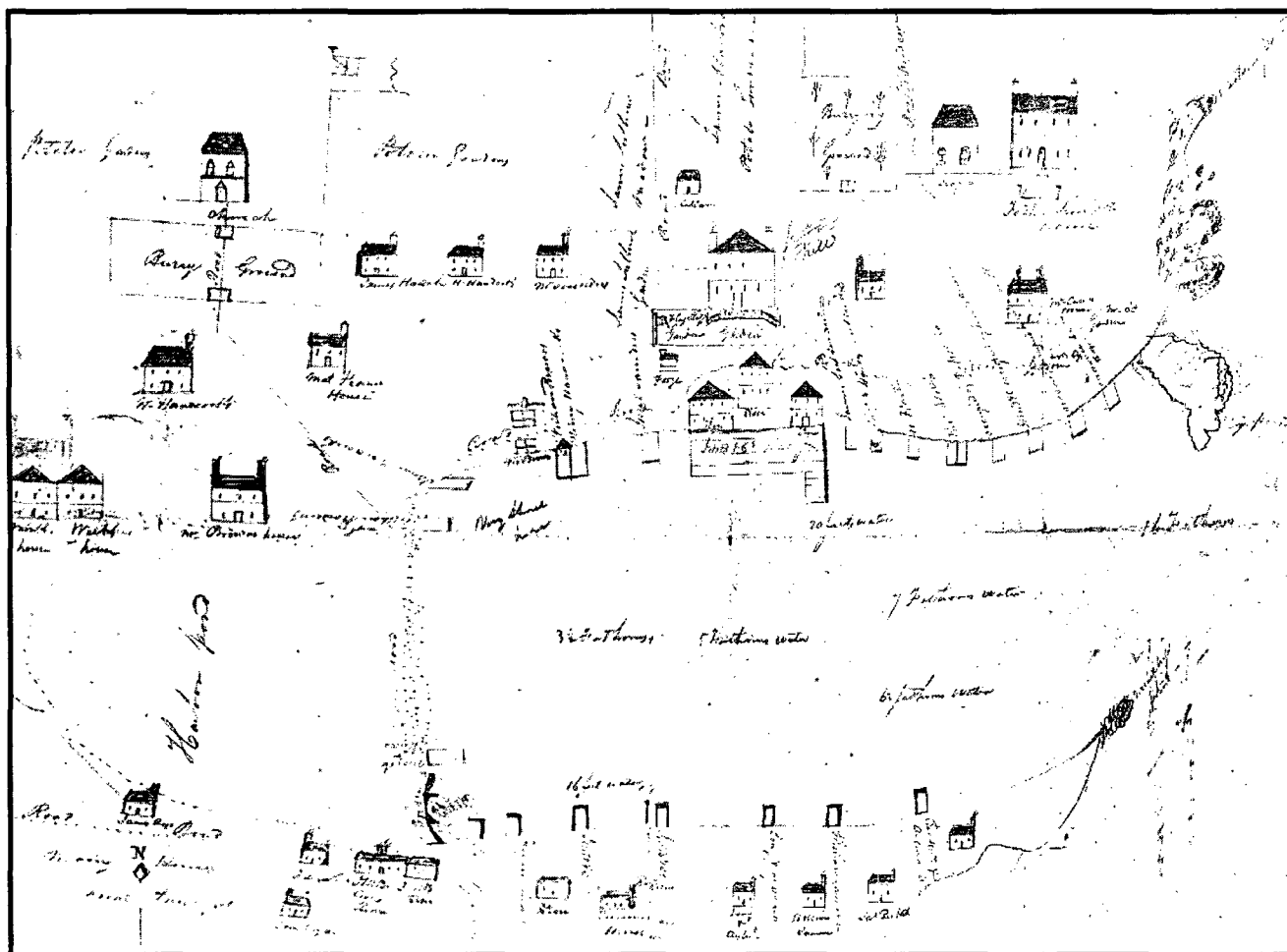


Image 2.4: A Sketch of King's Cove, Bonavista Bay (ca. 1800)<sup>84</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Produced using photographs mg29 from the MacBraire Collection, file#5, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador

Local merchants were “happy to have a class of core, productive clientele in [their] area of operations”. Dwyer’s article details the evolution of a new, forceful *yeoman* class which became the darlings of the merchant class in 18<sup>th</sup> century Bonavista Bay. Yeomen represented “a class of senior, settled fishermen who knew how the system worked and were talented commercial operators in their own right”<sup>85</sup>. Hornsby, by contrast, emphasizes the social stratification of Cape Breton’s English fishery. Despite these differences in approach, both authors are, to some degree, exploring the same type of historical, commercial landscape. But in these studies, and indeed in most other studies mentioned here, an examination of the fishing room as morphology has largely been neglected. It is my intention in this thesis to remedy this situation.

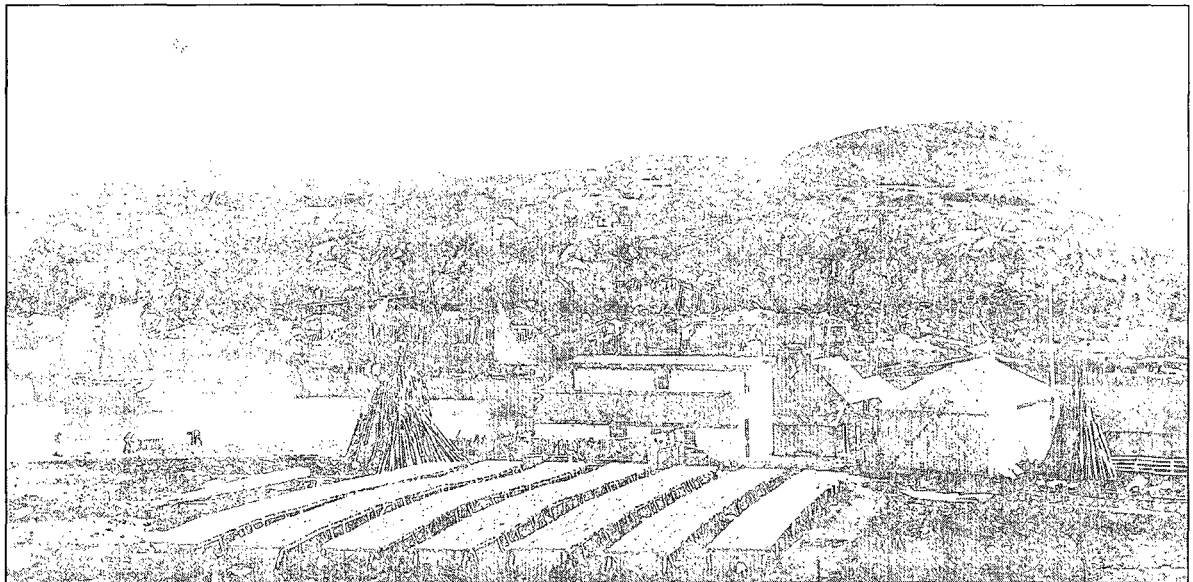


Image 2.5: Venison Tickle, Labrador<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Dwyer 2006: 43

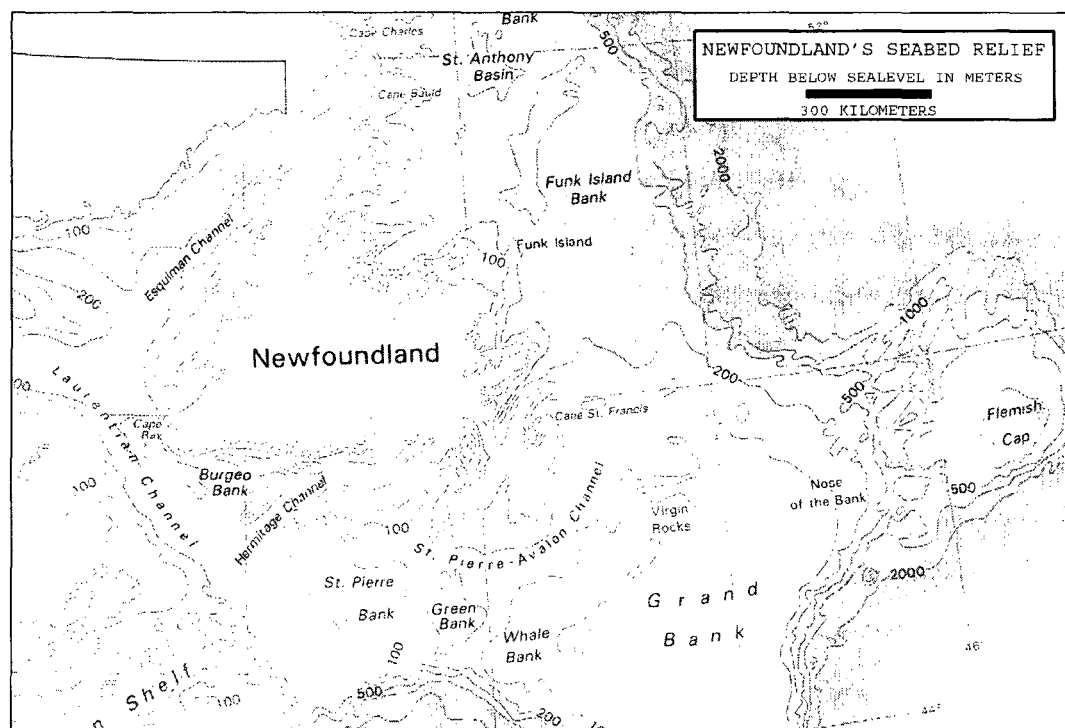
<sup>86</sup> Photograph owned by the Public Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador in *The New Maritime History of Devon*, vol. 2: 44

## CHAPTER 3.0: EARLY EUROPEAN FISHERIES AT NEWFOUNDLAND

### 3.1: INTRODUCTION

16<sup>th</sup> century European migratory fishery voyages to Newfoundland exploited the seasonal and spatial behaviour of remote cod stocks to satisfy the supply and demand trends of European markets. Garnering knowledge of fishery resources and the logical deployment of shipping to exploit them is, to a degree, the story of early Newfoundland exploration. The prodigious time and effort expended in gaining knowledge of the movement of cod stocks in the sea through the use of lead lines and baited hooks gives us a profound appreciation for the early fisherman's task.

### 3.2: NEWFOUNDLAND'S SUBMARINE ENVIRONMENT



<sup>1</sup> Atlas of Newfoundland and Labrador 1991: Plate 5



Newfoundland's continental shelf, a submerged plain containing a variety of troughs, hills and boulders, forms an underwater extension to North America's eastern coastline (Map 3.1)<sup>2</sup>. This marked widening of the shelf projects some 500 kilometres south-east from the *Avalon Peninsula* (see introductory map) encompasses some 50,000 square kilometres, and is collectively known as the *Grand Banks*<sup>3</sup>. This undersea landscape, characterised by channels, ledges, shoals and rocks, contributes a great physical diversity to Newfoundland waters, and supports marine resources of great size, abundance, and diversity<sup>4</sup>.

### 3.3: ATLANTIC COD RESOURCES IN NEWFOUNDLAND WATERS

Atlantic cod inhabiting Newfoundland's offshore banks seek habitats with particular temperature and chemical conditions. In winter months, cod experience a *demersal* phase during which they inhabit deep water and feed primarily upon crustaceans. With warmer conditions in spring, cod become *pelagic*, and ascend to the surface to prey upon various bait species<sup>5</sup>. Cod movements, therefore, are triggered by changing seasonal conditions and food availability which, in turn, affect their positioning within the water column and spatial distribution over the banks.

Cod and bait-fish in-migrations, conditioned by the changing water temperature and ocean conditions, begin along Newfoundland's southern extremities and extend northward as summer progressed. A number of *discrete cod stocks* separate themselves

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<sup>2</sup> Macpherson 1981: 14-16

<sup>3</sup> Innis 1978: 9; See also Farmer 1981: 56-61; Lounsbury 1969: 8-9

<sup>4</sup> Morison 1971: 470; See also de la Morandiere 1962: 27-30; Templeman 1966: 23-27; Innis 1978: 2-3

<sup>5</sup> Templeman 1966: 39-40; See also Head 1976: 3-6

from the offshore biomass to follow prey fish migrations toward the coast<sup>6</sup>. For example, in late May capelin travel in multitudes toward the Avalon Peninsula to spawn on sandy beaches and shoals<sup>7</sup>. As sea temperatures gradually moderate, capelin appear in more northern harbours. South-eastern Newfoundland experiences the earliest appearance of cod and the longest fishery period which was of great significance to Portuguese and Basque migratory fishermen.

### 3.4: EUROPEAN MIGRATORY FISHERIES AT NEWFOUNDLAND

Continental European fishermen generally harvested cod from southerly offshore banks where some of the largest cod available in Newfoundland waters were found (Figure 3.1). Cod catches were processed on board using a heavily-salted or *wet-processing* method before being stored in the ship's hold. Normally, there was no need to make landfalls along the Newfoundland coast. As offshore cod were accessible year-round, voyage scheduling was organized such that European fishermen could return their first cargos to market before the Lenten period commenced. So, fishermen often departed for the banks in January or early February<sup>8</sup>. However, inclement winter weather conditions in the North Atlantic made these early voyages particularly uncomfortable for crewmembers<sup>9</sup>. Individual fishing stations prepared along the ship's main deck served as

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<sup>6</sup> "And the cod, in a unique phenomenon, detach enormous numbers of their deep-sea populations each spring and summer, turning in pursuit of the tiny silvery capelin and other 'baitfish' on their annual roll, or 'scull,' towards the shore." Story 1997: 2; See also Innis 1978: 5; Head 1976: 11, 20-21

<sup>7</sup> "They [capelin] frequent sandy beaches and sandy banks. I, myself, have been in a Boat amongst a shoal of them, If you put a basket out you will draw it in full." Thomas (1794) 1968: 79; See also de la Morandiere 1962: 88-89; Prowse (1895) 2002: 21

<sup>8</sup> Innis 1978: 48; See also Head 1976: 16; de la Morandiere 1962: 147-148; Morison 1971: 272

<sup>9</sup> de la Morandiere 1967: 25; See also Lounsbury 1969: 10-13

rudimentary shelter to shield fishermen against bone-chilling winds and icy spray<sup>10</sup>. In a sense, European ships became mobile fishing platforms where cod were harvested and wet-processed within a confined space.

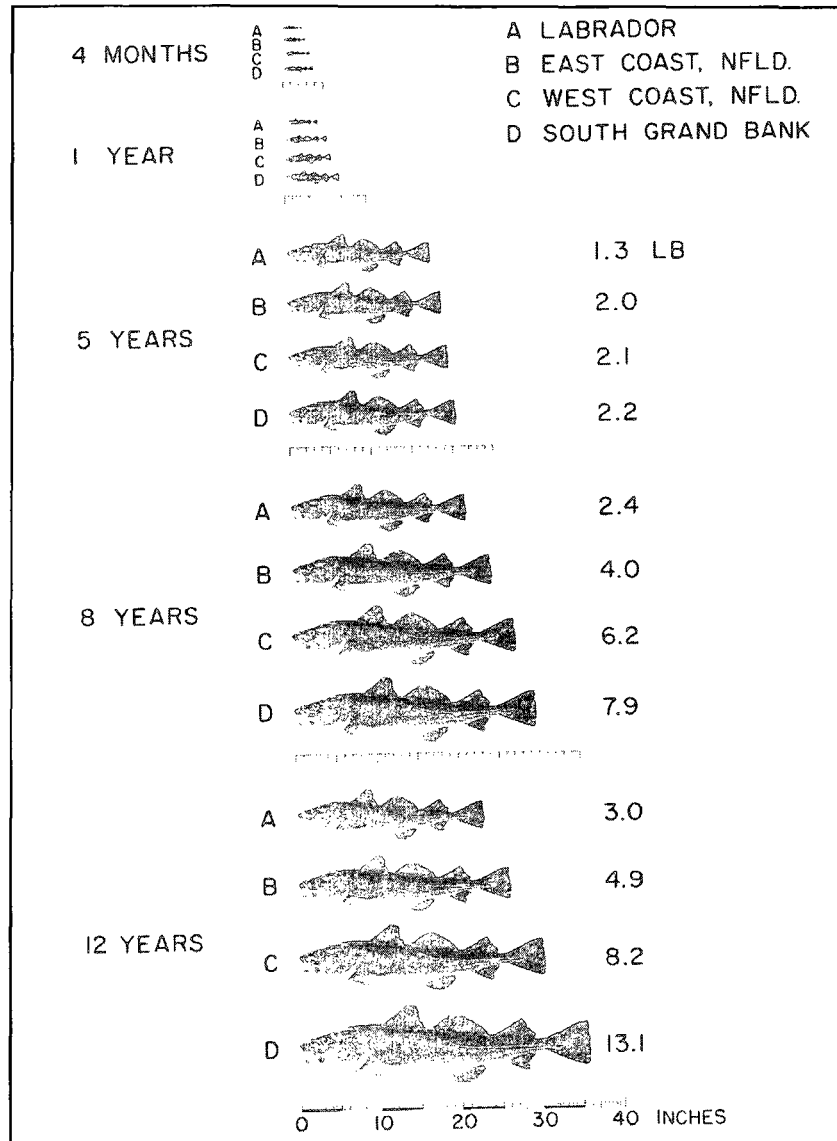


Figure 3.1: Variations in Cod Length and Weight for Newfoundland Areas<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "... the [French] crews [set] up platforms from which they would fish, along the vessel's rail, fabricating wind and rain protection to be mounted above and just outside the platforms, and making barrels within which the fishermen would stand to keep dry." Head 1976: 16; See also de la Morandiere 1967: 14-15; Innis 1978: 48-49; Prowse (1895) 2002: 23

Cod harvesting techniques were relatively unsophisticated during the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>. A weighted line with a baited hook was lowered to a depth of 50 metres or less, depending on cod positioning within the water column<sup>13</sup>. When cod were taken aboard, they were cleaned and rinsed, and the spinal bone was removed allowing the fish to be laid flat. Coarse salt was sprinkled heavily on either side of the fish giving the European *wet fishery* its name<sup>14</sup>. Cod livers were collected in large wooden casks called *train vats* where they decomposed into oil for lubricants, lamp fuel, or for leather tanning<sup>15</sup>. Salt-cured fish was sold in *quintals*, a standard measurement based upon 120 fish, and could be stored for reasonably long periods<sup>16</sup>.

Continental fishermen who harvested cod exclusively offshore could *wet-process* their catches entirely on board ship. They sometimes ventured inshore to complete repairs and harvest supplies of bait and wood fuel, but these trips were generally brief. The

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<sup>11</sup> Templeman 1966: 52

<sup>12</sup> Anspach 1819: 429

<sup>13</sup> de la Morandiere 1962: 85-88, 145; See also Head 1971: 14; Templeman 1966: 37-39, 45

<sup>14</sup> "The fish were headed, gutted and split at tables on deck, and were then passed to a salter in the hold, where they were laid in piles with great amounts of salt. The product was thus the 'green' or 'wet' heavy-salted fish." Head 1976: 16; See also Innis 1978: 26; Lounsbury 1969: 23, 56; Morison 1971: 476; Cell 1983: 2

<sup>15</sup> Thomas (1794)1968: 182

<sup>16</sup> "The catch was measured by the 'quintal', technically one hundred fish, but in order to allow for a wrong count, difference in size, and spoiling, it was customary to consider it as 120 fish." Lounsbury 1969: 57-58; Note: The 'English quintal' was based upon 112 pounds [50.8 kg] which assumes a unit weight for cod of only 1 pound [0.45kg] each which seems extremely low.

Avalon Peninsula had sheltered harbours<sup>17</sup> where ships could be anchored, cargoes re-organized, fouled ballast stones replaced, and vessels heaved down for repairs<sup>18</sup>.

Place names are among the things that link men most intimately with their territory. As the generations pass on these names from one to the other, successive tongues wear away the syllables just as water and wind smooth the rocks; so they become rounded, slip more easily from the tongue, perhaps lose their meaning, yet grow more and more closely attached to the land itself. So closely, indeed, that often place names outlast the language that made them, remaining as evidence of the former presence of dispossessed or submerged peoples<sup>19</sup>.

A number of continental migratory fishermen such as the Normans, Basques, Spanish, English and French, incorporated shore base occupation into their overseas ventures, and occupied shore stations where they anticipated the arrival of inshore cod migrations. The process whereby the Newfoundland coastal landscape was identified and named can be clearly appreciated through the examination of 16<sup>th</sup> century maps. It might be suggested that the designation of place names to fishing harbours, prominent landscape features, and even submarine banks identified areas of primary importance to trans-Atlantic explorers and migratory fishermen. Map 3.2 shows how the emerging spatial distribution of the linguistic origins of place names shows how they reflected the nationalities of fishermen who began to make landfalls and to utilize shoreline locations<sup>20</sup>.

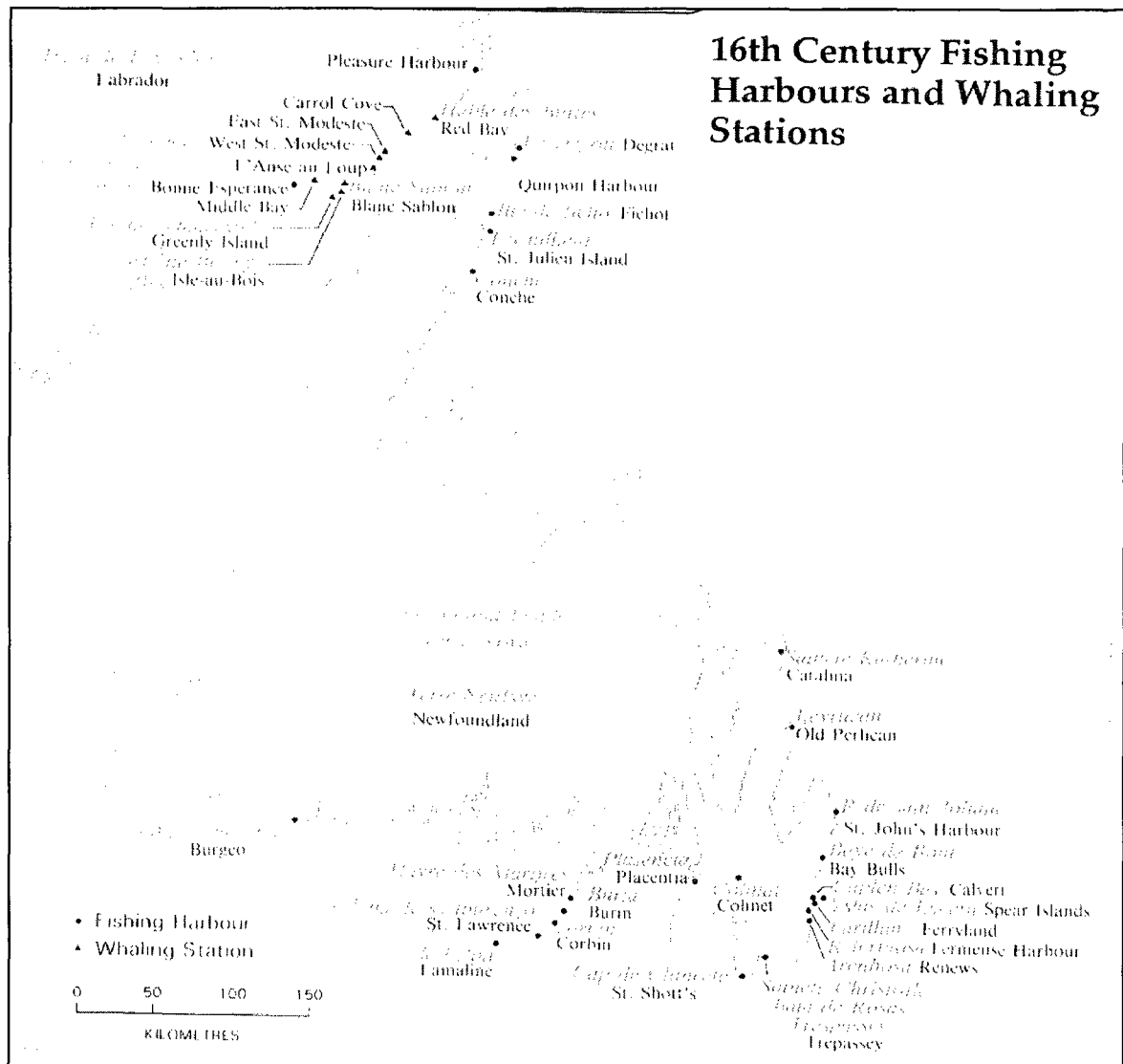
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<sup>17</sup> "A good one [harbour] required at least three attributes: shelter from wind, proper water depths, and good holding ground [i.e. a bottom that would allow an anchor to dig in, and not to drag]." Head 1976: 182; See also Morison 1971: 224 -227

<sup>18</sup> Ropes were attached to the masts, pulled downward by crew members, and the ship was tilted over to allow the hull to be scraped down or repaired more easily. Heaving down procedures were best completed near shore where there was reasonably deep water to protect the keel. Morison 1971: 135

<sup>19</sup> Hawkes 1959: 134

<sup>20</sup> "Fishermen and explorers gave European names to the new coastline. Capes, headlands, offshore islands, and large harbours were most frequently named, and these names, often transferred from fishermen's maps, were recorded by cartographers in Europe . . . most of them taken from French or Portuguese sources, that



Map 3.2: 16<sup>th</sup> Century Fishing Harbours and Whaling Stations<sup>21</sup>

can be located precisely on modern maps. They are spelled as first recorded, and frequently [in] jumbled languages.” Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: Plate 22

<sup>21</sup> Atlas of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1991: Plate 7; Note: This map includes English place names which were often derivations of *Portuguese*, *Spanish*, or *French* names.

### 3.5: THE ENGLISH MIGRATORY FISHERY

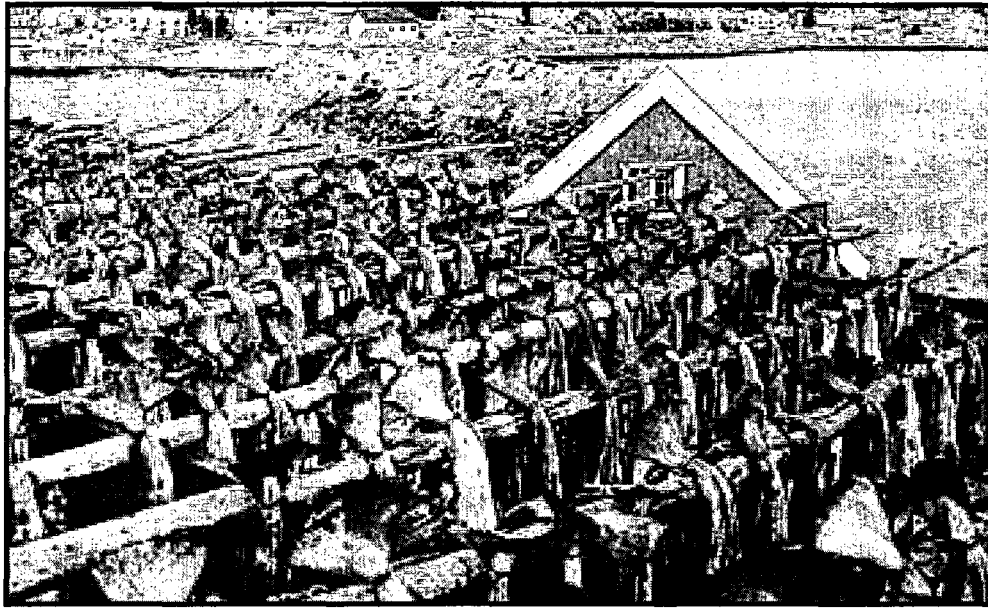


Image 3.1: The Stockfish Cod Processing Method<sup>22</sup>

Engagement in 15<sup>th</sup> century fisheries off the coasts of Ireland and Iceland had supplied English seamen with considerable practical experience in migratory fisheries. The Scandinavians had developed a wind-drying technique for preserving cod called *stockfish* which did not require the use of salt (Image 3.1). French and Basque fishermen adapted this stockfish method for their migratory fisheries, but incorporated salt into the cure. Wet-processed cod could be washed out and laid in the sun to dry for several days: a process that could be completed in home ports, or in Newfoundland harbours. English migratory fishermen also employed a variation of the Scandinavian stockfish process that became known as the *English Cure* in which they used small quantities of salt to expedite the air-drying. The English cure required less salt than wet-cured fish, and rendered a

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<sup>22</sup> Sinsheimer 2001; “Stockfish was a traditional Scandinavian method of drying fish wherein cleaned cod were tied together at the tails, suspended over a pole, and exposed to the sere, chill winds of spring. Water was effectively drawn from flesh to yield a dry product.” Innis 1978: 11; See also de la Morandiere 1962: 255; Morison 1971: 473; Cell 1969: 5

light, storable food product that was readily acceptable to European consumers. However, a climate characterized by cool, wet and foggy conditions inhibited the English from locally producing evaporated sea salt in substantial quantities<sup>23</sup>.

16<sup>th</sup> century continental wet fisheries harvested cod primarily from offshore banks. The English fishery's exclusive reliance upon the English cure method had notable consequences at Newfoundland. The English fishery, however, was *land-based*, and involved an anticipation of annual bait and cod in-migrations to inshore shoals<sup>24</sup>. Prominent east coast headlands and bays hosted seasonal inshore fish concentrations<sup>25</sup>. Cod catches were dry-processed **entirely on shore** making the seasonal occupation of shore bases in Newfoundland integral to English migratory fishery activity.

The nature of coastal Newfoundland meant that only a small percentage of shoreline was accessible and optimal for ships. English Shore stations needed to be situated near inshore fishing grounds rich enough to support the necessary scale of commercial operations. Ideally, shore bases were established on gently-sloping areas of foreshore that were largely devoid of vegetation<sup>26</sup>. Generally, shore bases were generally established in harbours that were sheltered against stormy seas and inclement weather by

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<sup>23</sup> Morison 1971: 264, 473; See also Innis 1978: 36; Cell 1969: 5

<sup>24</sup> "The number and size of fishing grounds might have no relation at all to the quantity of fish available upon them, for given a similar influx of fish into two bays, the one with few grounds might have fish more concentrated (and thus more easily available) than the bay with many grounds." Head 1976: 23; Head 1971: 14-20

<sup>25</sup> Innis 1978: 20; See also Templeman 1966: 1, 37-38

<sup>26</sup> "Even within the most crowded harbours, such as St. John's, there was indeed ample room, but certain pieces of foreshore were favoured. Some were nearer the fishing grounds, and from them less time was spent in travel between shore and ground- the fishing process was fatiguing enough without excessive added rowing, frequently against heavy wind and wave." Head 1976: 35-36; See also Parry 1966: 69



natural, physical barriers. Shorelines dominated by cliffs, rocks and reefs, or those found near shallow water or rocky shoals and reefs, were considered unsuitable.

English hook-and-line operations could not proceed without securing a steady bait supply. Fishermen became aware of bait in-migration cycles, and coastal locations where these fish could be harvested most efficiently<sup>27</sup>. Bait-fish such as herring (*Clupea harengus harengus*), sand lance (*Ammodytes*), capelin (*Mallotus villosus*), and others migrated inshore at various times to reproduce before returning offshore<sup>28</sup>. Capelin in-migrations, or *capelin sculls*, were eagerly anticipated as their arrival to inshore waters signalled the onset of the shore cod fishery. During this exciting time, shore crews harvested capelin by hand, using *dip-nets*, or in fine-meshed nets called *seines*. Capelin schools spawned on the inter-tidal zone of Newfoundland beaches where they were collected and salt-preserved before being distributed as bait among shore fishermen.

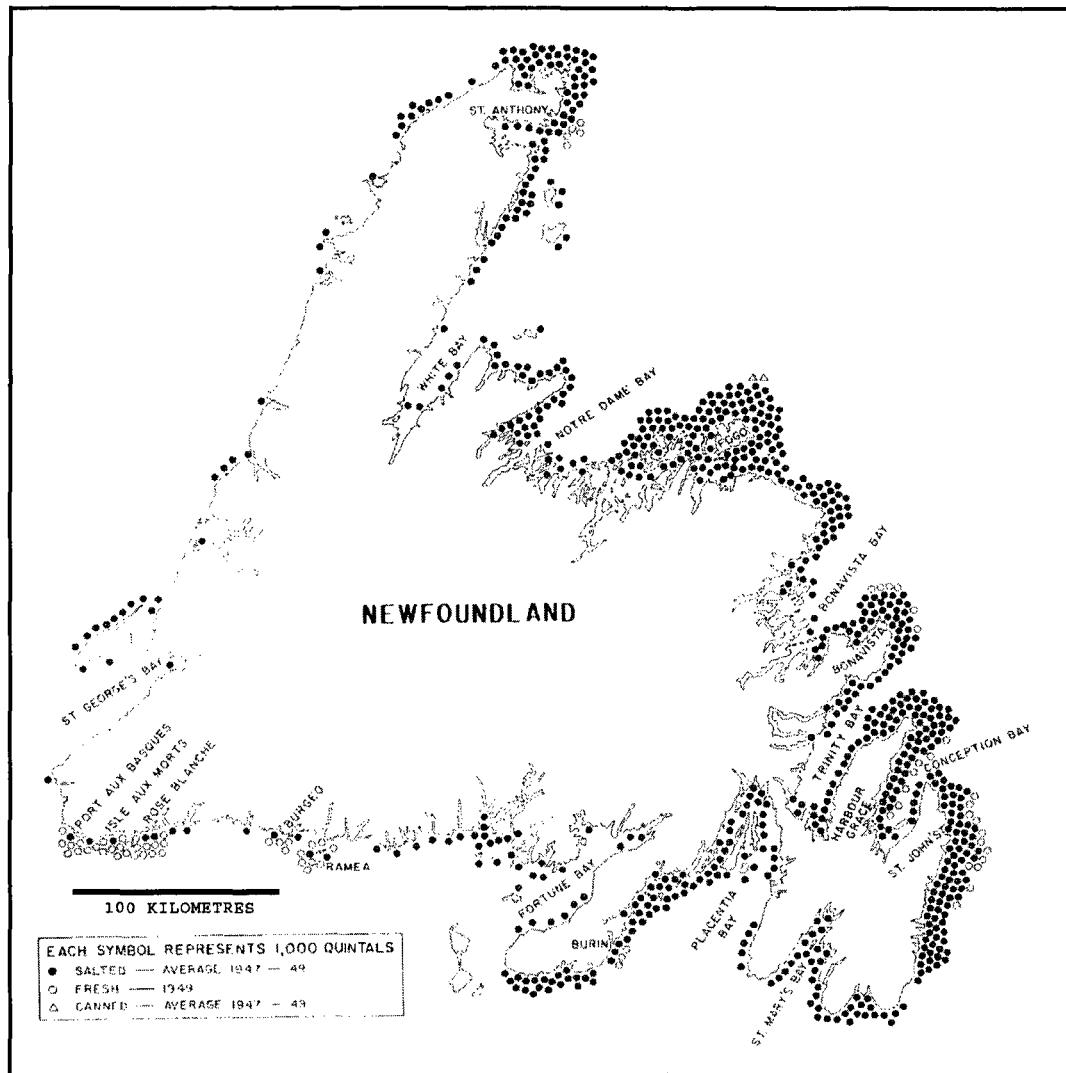
Seasonal bait-fish concentrations were followed inshore by cod in-migrations. Fishermen soon became aware of inshore *fishing ground* distributions, especially those found near south-east coast harbours<sup>29</sup>. An examination of 20<sup>th</sup> century cod landings (Map 3.3) may help us understand where cod and bait-fish generally congregated along the Newfoundland coast.

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<sup>27</sup> "... in these [fishing] boats there are no less than sixteen hooks in constant employment. Each hook is furnished with such bait as the season affords; namely, first, the entrails of the fish caught with jiggers; next herring, mackarel, lance, capelin, squids, or young cod; and in default of these, the flesh of sea-fowl." Anspach 1819: 429; See also Matthews 1988: 57; Neary 1974: 15-16

<sup>28</sup> Head 1971: 9, 89; See also Innis 1978: 5-6; Templeman 1966: 41-42, 106; Lounsbury 1934: 14; de la Morandiere 1962: 32

<sup>29</sup> "The cod were common to large areas of the North Atlantic, but they were particularly concentrated in certain places- spots that became increasingly better known to the fishermen." Head 1976: 20, 23-25; See also Head 1971: 9; Innis 1978: 5-6, 9; Templeman 1966: 25-27, 37-42, 106; Lounsbury 1964: 14; de la Morandiere 1962: 32



Map 3.3: Location of Inshore Cod Captures, 1947-49<sup>30</sup>

### 3.6: THE ENGLISH *SHIP ROOM*

During the early years of naval exploration, captains assumed full responsibility for their ships and the conduct of crew members while at sea or in foreign ports of call. Rules governing the occupation of foreign shores for Spanish, French, Basque and English inshore fishermen were required to ensure overseas enterprises were conducted

<sup>30</sup> Templeman 1966: 38

efficiently and profitably. Accessibility to Newfoundland coasts was often defined by national origin and fishery type (wet or dry). With the growing prominence of English ships on the Avalon Peninsula during the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, a method for supervising shore base allocations for inshore dry fisheries was needed to ensure commercial activities remained profitable.

The land use system introduced by the fishing admirals in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century was devised to formalize traditional rules governing English fisheries operating overseas. This system should not be confused with the later 18<sup>th</sup> century Admiralty government at Newfoundland which was both naval and legal in scope<sup>31</sup>. The fishing admiralty system was intended to provide a form of space utilization and commercial law that served the interests of English fishermen abroad. Empowering captains with this authority made excellent sense, and was intended to impart a form of *seasonal commercial law* over fishing spaces that promoted stability and efficiency in trans-Atlantic fisheries.

While regulations governing the seasonal distribution of fishing rooms was clearly defined under English law, during the fishing admirals' era records were imperfectly kept and little detailed information remains concerning how fishing rooms were allocated from year to year, and by whom. In theory, under the fishing admiralty system the title of *admiral* was supposedly assigned to the earliest captain to arrive at a specific Newfoundland harbour. This distinction, however, continued only for one fishing season. An admiral chose the best shore positions available for his crew, and allocated the remaining shore space to ships arriving afterward<sup>32</sup>. An admiral was charged with the

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<sup>31</sup> Bannister, 2003

<sup>32</sup> McEwen 1978: 14; See also Buchanan 1786: 1; Head 1964: 8; Bannister 2003: 31

protection of the harbour against interlopers for which responsibility he received labour services, salt, supplies or rent from other fishermen using the harbour.

The era of the fishing admiralty system, therefore, remains a shadowy period in Newfoundland history. It can be argued that the fishing admiralty system did not establish norms for fishing room standardization or in any way shaped coastal land use patterns that emerged. On the other hand, perhaps it did offer a template for commercial fishery land use, especially within productive Newfoundland harbours, where the scale of commercial fishery operations could be most effectively and profitably satisfied. Let us look at the English ship room in more detail as it constituted the first English use of Newfoundland shore space (Image 3.2).

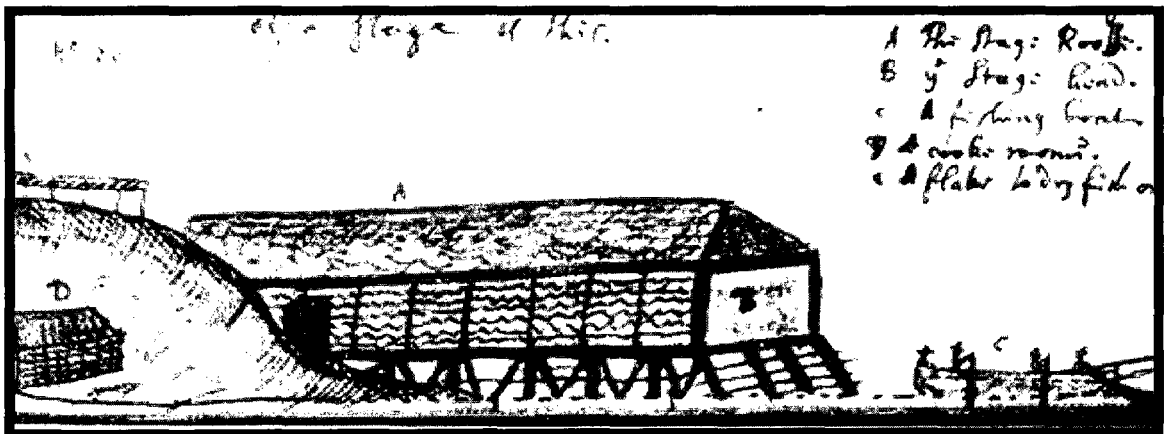


Image 3.2: “The Cod-Fisher’s Stage” (ca. 1650)<sup>33</sup>

The Newfoundland *fishing room*, or fishing space, is a generic term referring to a piece of foreshore that contained the routine harvesting and dry-processing activities for ships of approximately forty tons<sup>34</sup>. The fishing ships used for overseas fishery ventures

<sup>33</sup> The Journal of James Yonge, 1647-1721, Longman, Green and Co., 1963, Plate 4B: (A. The stage roof B. y<sup>e</sup> Stage head, C. A fishing boat, D. A cook’s room, E. A flake to dry fish on)

<sup>34</sup> The State of the English Fishery at Newfoundland, 1644 as reported to the Commissioners for Foreign Trade and Plantations by the Western Adventurers in Prowse (1895) 2002: 190

were essentially supply vessels which transported the smaller fishing boats which were deployed to actually catch the fish. Fishing rooms needed to satisfy three basic requirements: convenient proximity to inshore fishing grounds; a foreshore area where daily cod catches could be landed; and an area of reasonably flat, cleared land where cod could be dry-processed into salt fish. Ship rooms occupied prime fishing stations that were reserved for exclusive use of migratory fishermen. Inshore fisheries were conducted exclusively using small boats called *shallops* that travelled to and from the fishing grounds daily<sup>35</sup>. A fishing room's commercial value, therefore, was determined by its suitability to support large-scale commercial shore fisheries. Areas of foreshore that provided space for migratory ship crews were often referred to as *ship rooms*.

Each spring, English fishing ships arrived along the Newfoundland coast where captains selected their ship rooms, and landed their shore crews to erect the *stages*, *flakes* and *cook-rooms* necessary for a season of large-scale fish-processing activity<sup>36</sup>. These structures may well have been crudely fashioned using local forest materials, but served a vital function during the fishery period<sup>37</sup>. It was prudent to establish ship rooms near forest stands where wood fuel, *dinnage* (or *dunnage*) and building materials were readily

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<sup>35</sup> "A shallop, for example, might need only some 2 fathoms [4 metres] of water in its anchorage, but anchorages suitable for 'shipping' appear to require at least eight fathoms [16 metres] and could utilize anything up to 40 fathoms [80 metres]." Head 1976: 3; See also Head 1976: 5, 36, 182; de la Morandiere 1962: 170-171; Morison 1971: 473; Thomas (1794) 1968: 181

<sup>36</sup> "As soon as we resolve to fish here, the ship is all unrigged, and in the snow and cold all the men go into the woods to cut timber, fir, spruce, and birch, being here plentiful. With this they build stages, flakes, cookrooms [sic], and houses, The stages are made of a frythe [sic] of boughs, sealed inside with rinds, . . . [and] are begun on the edge of the shore and built out into the sea, a floor of round timber, supported with posts, and shores of great timber. The boats lie at the head of them, as at a key, and throw up their fish, which is split, salted & c." James Yonge, 1663 in Neary 1974: 29; See also Parry 1963: 119; Handcock 1989: 24

<sup>37</sup> Lawrence Coughlan, 1776 in Neary 1974: 56; See also Parry 1963: 119

accessible<sup>38</sup>. Ship rooms were prepared in anticipation of the laborious fishery period of twelve to sixteen weeks during which crew members sometimes worked between eighteen and twenty hours per day<sup>39</sup>.

During the late-16<sup>th</sup> century, the most desirable Avalon Peninsula fishing harbours were subjected to intensive and largely unregulated tree felling practises<sup>40</sup>. Carelessly managed cooking fires, and deliberate burning would eventually remove tree-lines farther from waterside used by shore fishermen<sup>41</sup>. The cumulative impacts of forest denudation would eventually clear core fishing harbours, and thus remove vital wood resources farther away from English shore fishermen<sup>42</sup>.

Herman Moll's 1710 woodcut (Image 3.3) depicts an English ship room that accurately portrayed the methods and equipment employed in salt fish production. During the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, however, it was highly unlikely that the English would have built such elaborate structures on property they could not own or continually occupy. The woodcut provided no indication of how land behind the shoreline was organized for large-scale fish production activities. A ship room needed to be large enough to accommodate a crew complement of approximately forty men, complete with provisions,

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<sup>38</sup> "... [ship's] holds had been carefully lined with "dinnage"- dried branches and other small wood- to prevent dampness reaching the fish." Head 1976: 4

<sup>39</sup> Bannister 2003: 10; See also Lounsbury 1969: 57

<sup>40</sup> Daniel Powell to Lord Calvert, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1622 in Prowse (1895) 2002: 130-131; See also Head 1976: 6; Lounsbury 1969: 58; Buchanan 1786: 10, notes; Letter of Edward Wynne to George Calvert, August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1622 in Prowse (1895) 2002: 131

<sup>41</sup> Head 1976: 19, 8; See also Head 1964: 2; Buchanan 1786: 1

<sup>42</sup> "[Spruce trees provided]: Yeast to raise Bread with; Essence of Spruce, the common drink here; Building Houses; Bark, to cover the Houses with; Firing; Building Fish Flakes; Preserve the Sails of their Vessels [waterproofing]; Oars, for their Boats; Masts and Yards for Ships; Cattle browse on the tender Branches; Making Pudings [made with deer's hair and eggs which is hung in the sun to bake ] with." Thomas (1794) 1968: 59

supplies and equipment, for an intensive fishery period lasting about three months<sup>43</sup>. Fishing admiralty regulation required captains to remove buildings and shore infrastructure from their ship rooms at season's end. Captains generally complied because they were unwilling to surrender their hard labours to benefit competitors arriving the following spring. After years of successive ship room usage, the coastline retained vestiges of a workable land use design that survived upon the landscape<sup>44</sup>.

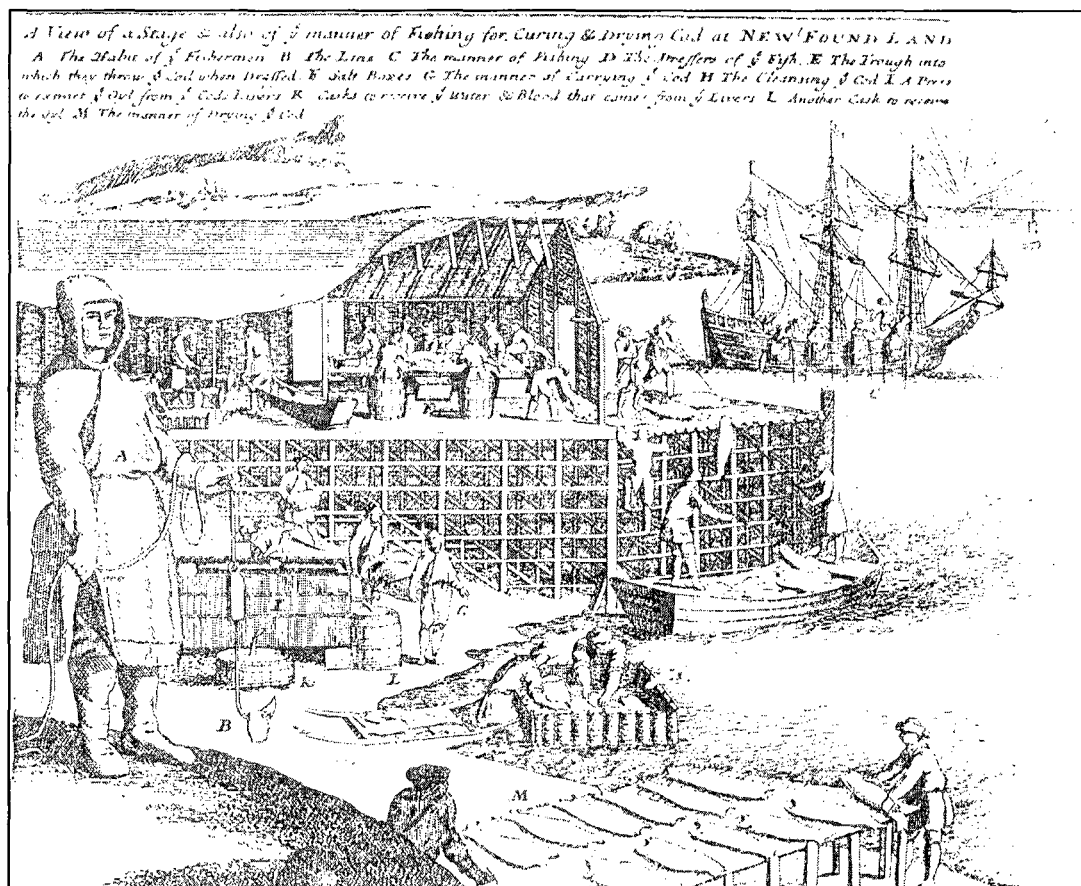


Image 3.3: "A View of ye Stage & Also ye Manner of Fishing. . ." (1710)<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Head 1976: 30

<sup>44</sup> "Yellowed patches amongst the hillside grasses would show where flakes had stood. The roughness of the shoreline lay revealed, with its rocks and gullies, features which had been covered with structures during the summer. The winding paths stood testimony to the activity that had gone before." Head 1976: 18, 6

<sup>45</sup> Herman Moll's woodcut in Prowse (1895) 2002: 22

By the late-16<sup>th</sup> century, the transatlantic fishery became divided as English and continental European fishermen each gravitated toward distinct fishing harbours along Newfoundland's southeast coast (See Map 3.2)<sup>46</sup>.

### 3.7: LAND USE ON ENGLISH FISHING ROOMS

It may be helpful to calculate the average scale of activity on a ship room in order to better comprehend the amount of shore space occupied by English ship fisheries. English fishery estimates for 1644 associate ship tonnage with the number of boats and men engaged in the fishery<sup>47</sup>. English vessels by this period averaged 40 tons and carried at least forty men. A ship usually transported eight boats, each employing three fishermen and two shore labourers<sup>48</sup>. This small boat crew of five handled between two and three hundred quintals of fresh fish per boat during the fishing season. Based on an average ship complement of eight boats, and a seasonal catch rate per boat of 25,000-30,000 cod<sup>49</sup>, a ship room needed to provide space to dry-process between 200,000 and 240,000 cod over a season of approximately ninety days. Once begun, dry-processing procedures

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<sup>46</sup> Handcock 1989: 273, 58

<sup>47</sup> "There were 270 ships annually employed in the Newfoundland fishery besides those who brought salt and carried the fish [sack ships] to market computing the ships at 80 tons each and for every 100 tons 50 men and 10 boats. There were in all 21,600 tons 10,800 seamen 2,160 boats. To each boat is allowed 5 men. Usual catch 200-300 qtls . . ." The State of the English Fishery at Newfoundland, 1644 as reported to the Commissioners for Foreign Trade and Plantations by the Western Adventurers in Prowse (1895) 2002: 190

<sup>48</sup> "... they may take about thirty-five thousand of fish for every boate, as divers yeares many men haue done in much less time: which will then amount to fourscore thousand more than the former two hundred thousand." Cell 1983: 177-178; Note: The figures above reflect average catch rates per boat in the English fishery. As such, they are to be used and extrapolated upon with appropriate caution.

<sup>49</sup> John Mason, *A Briefe Discourse of the Newfoundland*, 1620 in Neary 1975: 16; See also Pope 2004: 37; Cell 1969: 153



could not be delayed without detriment to the finished product. On average, it required approximately 77 days for an English ship's shore crew to harvest and dry-process an entire season's catch.

Fishing boats departed from the ship room for the fishing grounds in the early morning hours, and returned around midday where shore labourers unloaded, cleaned and prepared the fish for dry-curing<sup>50</sup>. On average, a boat crew handled between 325 and 390 cod per day (25,000-30,000 cod divided by 77 days). Therefore, we can assume that eight boats landed an average of between 2600 and 3120 cod per day (200,000 to 240,000 over 77 days). The dry-cure process required cleaned and salted cod to be spread flat on drying flakes, and turned regularly during daylight hours for between seven and ten days to create a finished salt fish product<sup>51</sup>. Under ideal conditions with warm, dry days and steady onshore breezes, a ship room needed enough flake space to accommodate at least seven days worth of landings simultaneously<sup>52</sup>. The wharf and stage were absolutely essential to the English dry fishery effort, and flake construction was necessary in the absence of rock or beach cobbles on which to lay out the fish. Where wood was scarce, fishermen could wet-process cod until it could be dried elsewhere, or spread on beach stones to cure. However, irregular coastal landscapes, an absence of beaches, areas of flat land and wood materials, etc. invited considerable variation in fishing room design.

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<sup>50</sup> Head 1976: 5

<sup>51</sup> Note: When cleaned, boned, salted and spread flat on the flake, a cod fish required approximately 0.2yds<sup>2</sup> (0.18m<sup>2</sup>) of flake space for proper drying. Cod size varied considerably, but five fish per square yard might well prove a reasonable estimate. Daily landings of between 2,600 and 3,120 cod needed between 520yds<sup>2</sup> (475.5m<sup>2</sup>) and 624yds<sup>2</sup> (570.6m<sup>2</sup>), or (2,600 to 3120 cod x 0.2yds<sup>2</sup>) of flake area for dry-processing duties. To accommodate seven days' catch simultaneously, flake area needed to range between 3640yds<sup>2</sup> and 4368yds<sup>2</sup> (3328m<sup>2</sup> to 3994m<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>52</sup> Morison 1971: 476

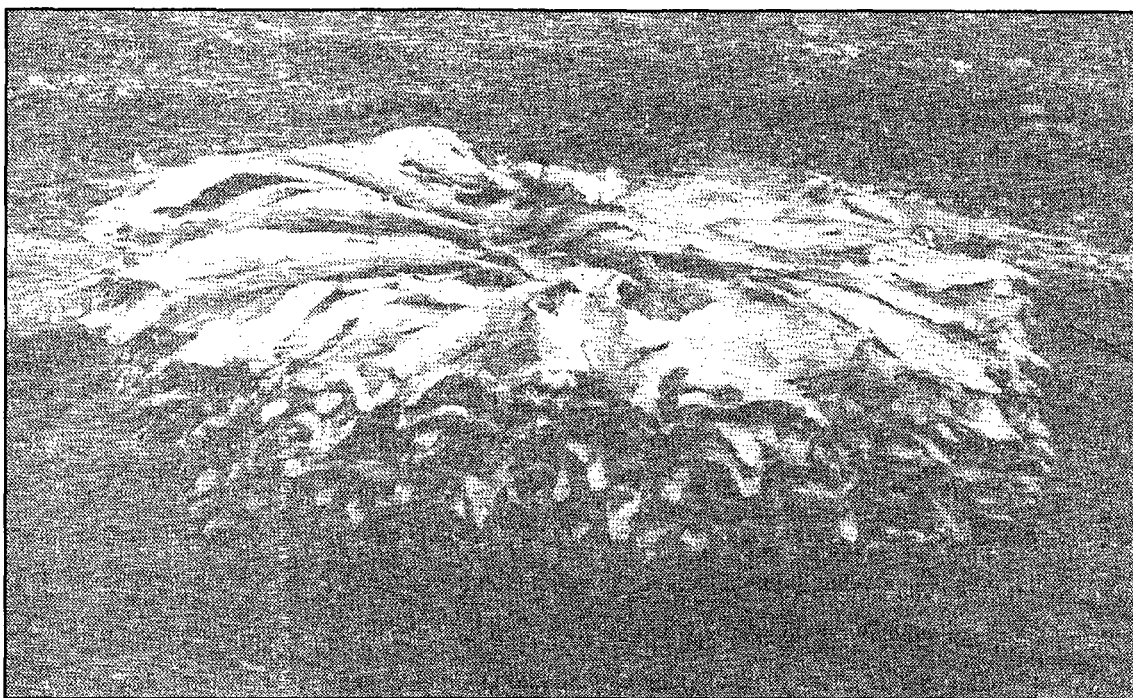


Image 3.4: A Salt Fish Pile (or *Faggot*)<sup>53</sup>

Fresh cod demanded immediate cleaning and salt processing to prevent spoilage<sup>54</sup>. Newly washed fish was a delicate commodity that needed to be spread carefully so that no two fish touched each other. Care was taken to ensure that air circulated freely around each fish. When split and cleaned, cod had a triangular shape, and could be arranged such that one fish was laid inversely, one alongside another, for efficient drying (see Images 3.9 and 3.10). The curing process could not be delayed without detriment to cure quality, especially during the early stages. Using too little salt invited spoilage during warm weather, and affected the prices realized at market. A poorly husbanded fish, like one bad apple, could spoil the entire batch. Cod were neither dried at night nor during rain or

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<sup>53</sup> Ryan 1986: 334; “Piling forced the moisture out of drying salt fish, and was a method employed during inclement or wet weather”.

<sup>54</sup> Anspach 1819: 430

foggy conditions<sup>55</sup>. As the cure progressed, salted cod could be stacked together in large piles called *faggots* (Image 3.4), or could be spread upon beach stones to finish<sup>56</sup>. Flakes were built near shore due to the excessive weight involved in handling heavy cod. Onshore breezes were most effective for drying, and were fresher and stronger here than farther inland.

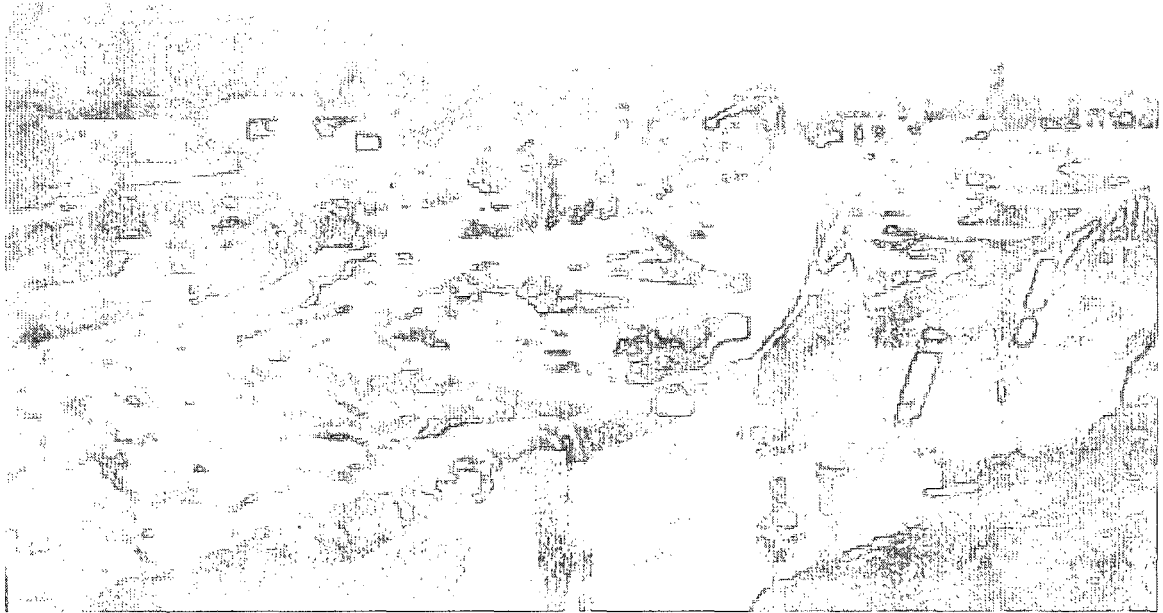


Image 3.5: Shore Crew Minding Hand Flakes at Bonne Esperance, Quebec, ca. 1932<sup>57</sup>

Shore labourers would have to manage flake space intelligently to ensure daily landings were dry-processed efficiently. While they could not anticipate the size of daily landings, they did control the amount of cod washed out for spreading. Husbanding batches of cod in varying stages of dryness simultaneously required experience, and even an ability to forecast weather. After a week or more in salt storage, shore labourers

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<sup>55</sup> James Yonge, 1663 in Neary 1974: 30-31

<sup>56</sup> Head 1976: 36

<sup>57</sup> Photograph va. 92-99, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador

washed out a quantity of cod to be spread on *hand flakes*<sup>58</sup> (Image 3.5). These structures that could be built quickly, and disassembled at the end of the fishing season. Hand flakes were approximately two metres wide and one metre high which allowed cod to be easily husbanded. *Broad flakes* were built more substantially than hand flakes, and were constructed upon established fishing rooms that were continuously occupied (Image 3.6).

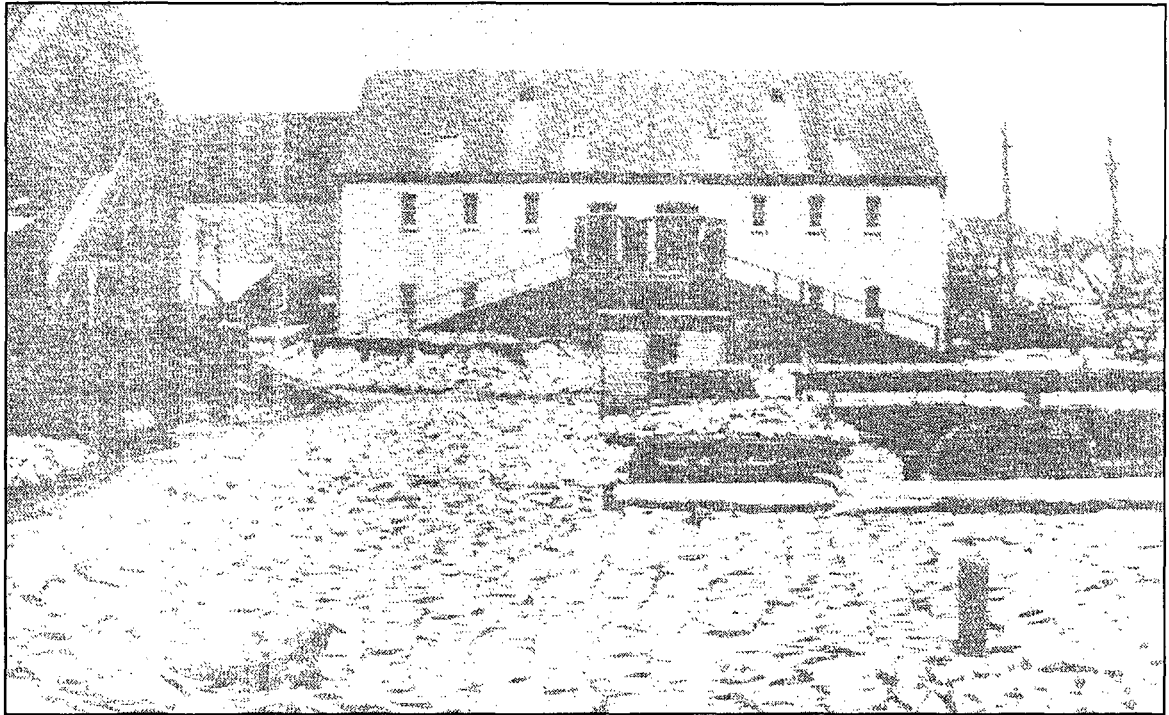


Image 3.6: Fish Drying on Broad Flakes at the P&L Tessier Premises, St. John's<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "... These last are of two sorts, namely, hand and broad flakes. The former consist of a slight wattle, supported by posts, at such an elevation from the ground that a person standing can conveniently manage and turn the fish. The broad flakes consist of a set of beams, supported by posts or shores, a stout pile of timber standing perpendicularly under the beams . . . In some places these broad flakes are as high as twenty feet [6.1m] from the ground." Anspach 1819: 430-437; See also Buchanan 1786: 5, notes; Head 1976: 3; de la Morandiere 1967: 13-14; Morison 1971: 475-476

<sup>59</sup> Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador Collection in Ryan 1986: 322

# **SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF 16th AND 17th CENTURY ENGLISH FISHING ROOMS FOUND ALONG THE NEWFOUNDLAND COAST\***

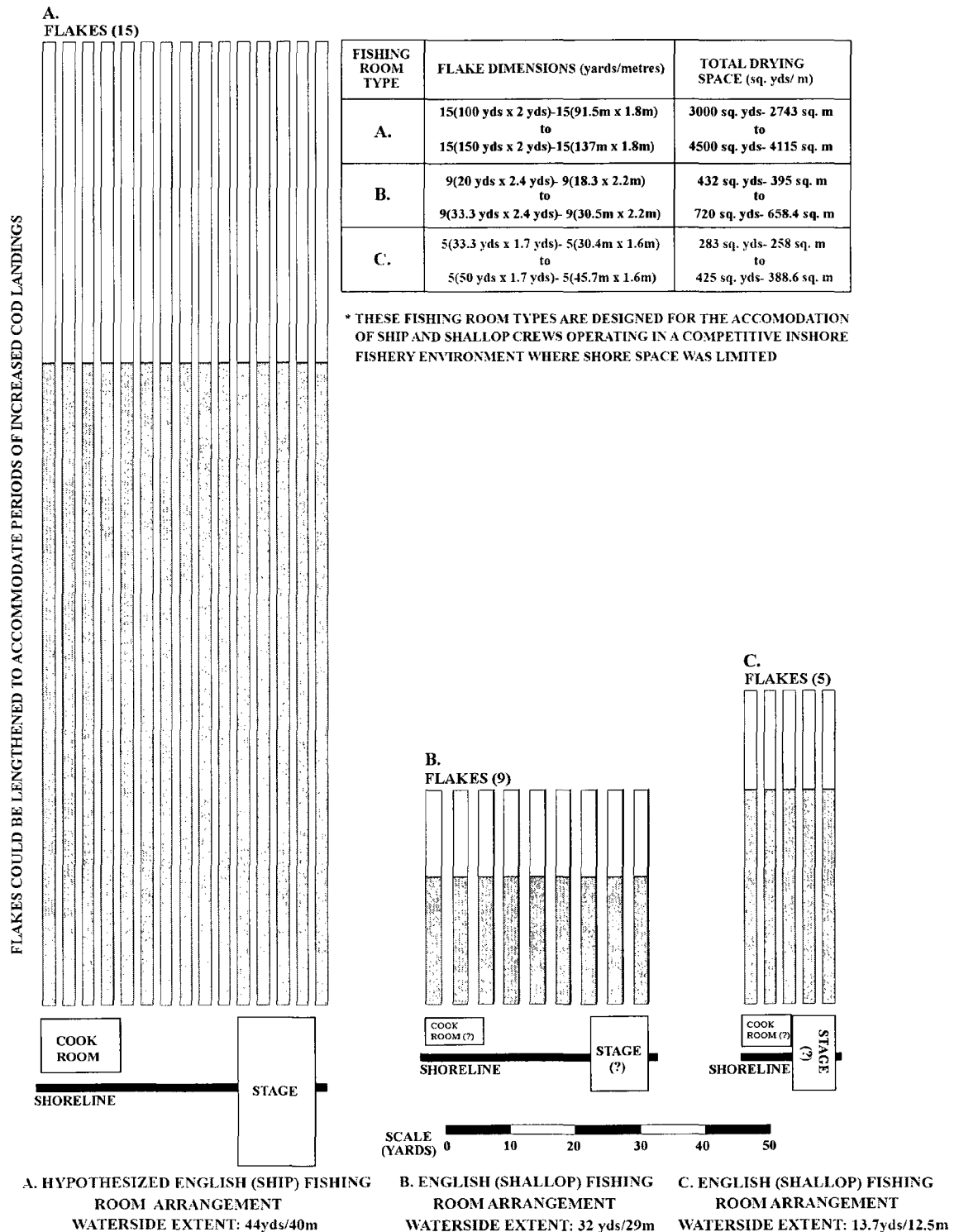


Figure 3.2: Hypothesized Flake Arrangements for Early English Fishing Rooms

The Historical Atlas of Canada contains several early land use designs that shaped a variety of Canadian landscapes<sup>60</sup>. Plates 21 and 27 explore how fishing rooms were incorporated into Newfoundland's coastal landscape. Figure 3.2 elaborates upon these schematic representations of the structures and flakes employed by English migratory fishermen at their shore bases. Schematic A, a hypothesized ship room, includes a cook room where meals for crew members were prepared, and a large wharf and stage. These structures would have been essential for operations comprising forty men. In this case, seasonal catch rates (for a ship employing eight shallops and forty shore crew members) and flake space requirements were used to calculate an average shore space allocation for an English ship operation.

Harold Innis's book included shore space measurements that were used to reconstruct shallop fishing rooms (Figure 3.2)<sup>61</sup>. Schematics B and C represent self-contained inshore fishery operations managed by a single shallop crew of five or six men. These diagrams perhaps anticipate the developing fragmentation of ship rooms as land use competition among English fishermen steadily increased. Although the figures were collected in 1805/1806, they suggest the size and general organization of small-scale fishing operations situated in a competitive coastal environment. "In 1727 the [English] governor at Placentia leased the beach to fishing ships for 130 pounds sterling, each boat being allowed 9 flakes of 60 feet by 8 feet [18.3m x 2.4m] and 4 feet [1.2m] between, . . . Other reports give 5 flakes of 100 feet by 6 feet [30.5m x 1.8m], that is 40 by 20 yards [12.2m x 6.1 m] front, or 7200 square feet [2195 m<sup>2</sup>]"'. Flake size and catch rate were

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<sup>60</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1, 1998: Plates 21, 27, 51, 52, 64

<sup>61</sup> P.C., IV, 1804-1805 in Innis 1978: 106-107 (See footnote #44)

important factors in determining the size and waterside extent of shallop fishing room allocations. Competition for shore space, especially within core fishery harbours, seems to have reduced shallop fisheries down to minimum, *standard* levels. “In well settled harbours the ancient custom is strictly adhered to and in case of dispute is ever the standard, forty feet [12.2m] front being esteemed one boat’s room without limitations backward. . . A boat’s room was described as ‘as much flake as will spread 70 quintals [3780kg] of ‘wet fish’, or 80 feet square [24.4m<sup>2</sup>] for 70 quintals [70 x 54kg = 3780kg] of large fish, and 100 feet square [30.5m<sup>2</sup>] for small fish”<sup>62</sup>. Shallop fishermen did not necessarily need to devote time and resources to build cook rooms or elaborate stages.

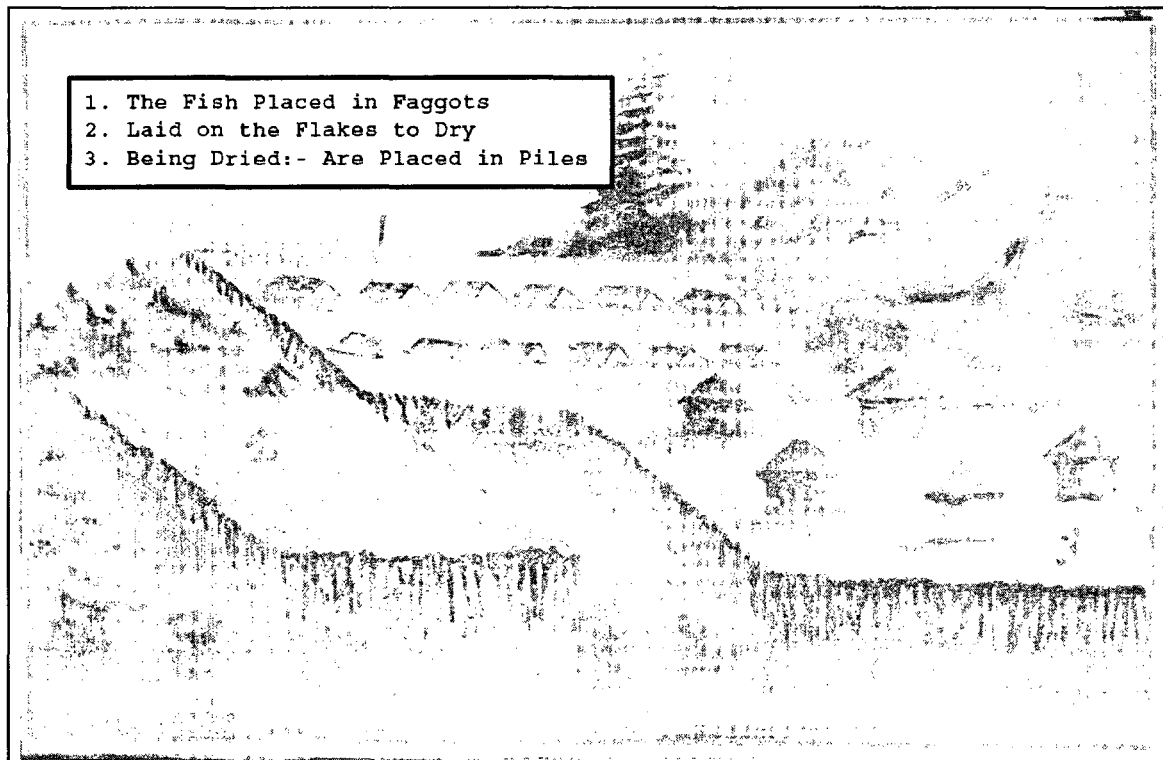


Image 3.7: “A Representation of the Fish Flakes, and Manner of Drying Fish in Newfoundland” (ca. 1794)<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> P.C., IV, 1804-1805 in Innis 1978: 106-107 (See footnote #44)

The schematics above are included to offer readers a concept of the general layout of both a complete self-contained ship room and individual outlying boat rooms. Boat rooms would have been associated with ship rooms, but could perhaps be situated some distance away due to variations in coastal topography.

A fishing room's total flake area represented an important linkage between catch rate and curing space. Larger cod demanded more drying space, and perhaps only two or three fish could be spread per square metre. Large fish dried more slowly due to an increased flesh thickness, and thus had to be husbanded through a complicated dry-curing process. Flake arrangements such as the one shown in Image 3.7 depicts how the business of producing salt fish assumed innovative forms on the coastal landscape.

### **3.8: THE EMERGENCE OF ENGLISH INSHORE FISHERY LAND USE**

Increasing participation in the English migratory fishery at the onset of the 17<sup>th</sup> century led to a re-examination of land use practises in the shore fishery. It is very possible that attention became focussed upon shore spaces suitable for individual boat operations rather than those accommodating entire ship crews<sup>64</sup>. A fragmentation of ship rooms might be appropriate to ensure that each ship's array of boat crews could each find a suitable shore base for its operations.

From the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, and due in no small part to the active removal of rival European fishermen from the eastern Avalon Peninsula, the English migratory fishery

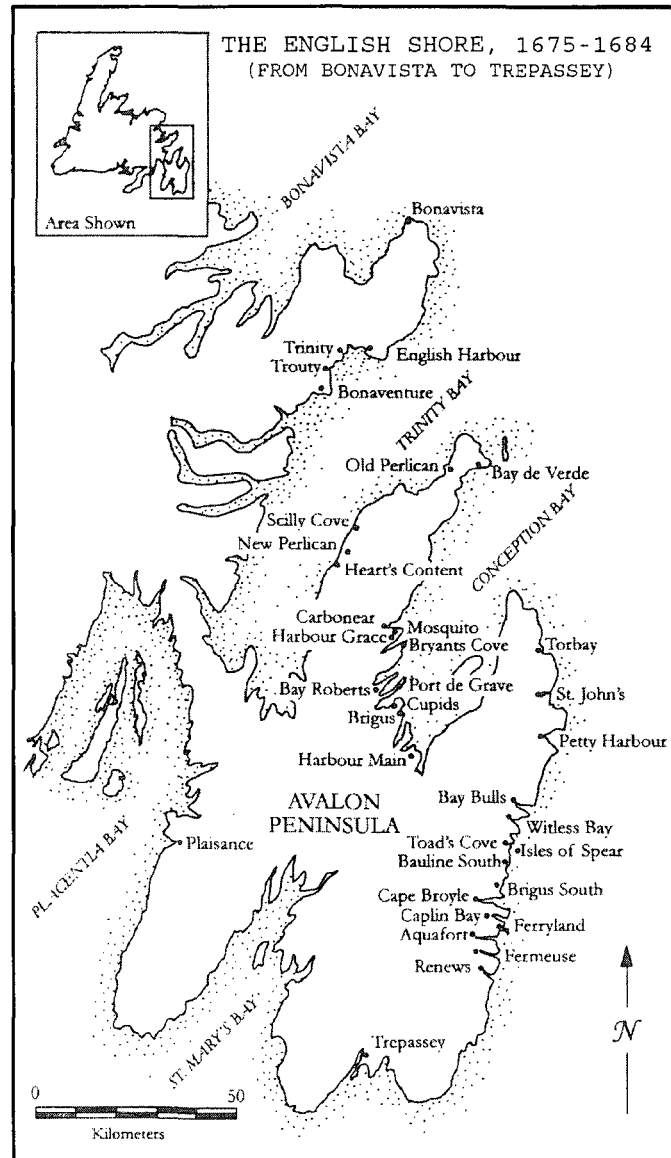
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<sup>63</sup> Thomas (1794) 1968: 104; Note: Information appertaining to the original drawing have subsequently been superimposed on Image 3.7 using a reference box at top left.

<sup>64</sup> "By the second half of the seventeenth century competition had become so intense that the captains had taken to launching their long boats while still up to twenty miles [32 km] from the land. The boat . . . would claim the fishing room for the ship it belonged to." Matthews 1988: 57



flourished<sup>65</sup>. New confidence was infused into the overseas salt fish trade which encouraged capital investment in Newfoundland fishery infrastructure. England gained control of virtually all harbours between Bonavista and Trepassey: an area that was later known as the *English Shore*<sup>66</sup> (see Map 3.4).



Map 3.4: The English Shore, 1675-1684<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Pope 2004: 17; See also Cell 1969: 47-49, 51; Matthews 1988: 53

<sup>66</sup> Cell 1969: 51

<sup>67</sup> Adapted from a map by Ed Eastaugh in Pope 2004: 49

## CHAPTER 4.0: NEWFOUNDLAND POPULATION GROWTH AND DISTRIBUTION

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Demographically these early English . . . settlements in Newfoundland [were] characterized by the overwhelming predominance of men, most of whom were overwintering servants, . . . the mobility of almost everyone-- servants more than planters, single planters more than those with Newfoundland families, -- . . . but almost everybody part of the ebb and flow of a trans-Atlantic fishery.<sup>1</sup>

16<sup>th</sup> century European migratory fishery operations involved the transportation of labour, supplies and equipment to the Newfoundland coast where cod was harvested and dry-processed for shipment to market. The English made seasonal fishing room occupation integral to their migratory fishery activities. During a three to four month fishery period, a workforce comprised primarily of young men and boys prepared salt fish for export. In summer, English Shore harbours hosted a substantial migratory fishery force, a small number of which were employed by ship captains as winter caretakers. The failure of 17<sup>th</sup> century colonial ventures introduced clutches of planters on the English Shore who financed independent inshore operations by bartering salt fish production for supplies and equipment through merchant intermediaries. English captains took advantage of this situation by enticing some crew members to seek employment with sedentary salt fish producers. While this practice increased voyage profitability, crewmen choosing to remain at Newfoundland after the fishing season ended did so illegally.

Initially, **permanent** Newfoundland settlement was considered unnecessary to support a seasonal industry. An English migratory fishery conducted inshore during summer constituted the only mode of fishing room occupancy along the Newfoundland coast. But by degrees, this mode gave way to semi-permanent occupancy (over-

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<sup>1</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: 49

wintering), and eventually to permanent (year round) residency. In time, a core population of inshore fishermen, described in scholarly literature using the terms *planter*, *bye-boatkeeper*, *stationary fisherman*, *settler*, *resident*, *fishery servant* and *labourer*, took root along the English Shore coastline. For this English Newfoundland population, all of these mobility-residency conditions coexisted, moiled and blended so thoroughly that it was difficult to hold to any particular term without ambiguity. In this chapter, we will explore how a fragile wintering population of English fishermen, existing without benefit of either settlement or land use policy, eventually gained control of a substantial proportion of English Shore salt fish production from migratory fishermen.

Inhabitants eventually secured conditional property rights to fishing rooms that they established and maintained. From the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, and in part a response to the expansion of French dry fisheries outside the English Shore area, the English government took steps to formalize territorial rights to fishing harbours that would affirm its monopoly over the Newfoundland salt fish trade.

During the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the erosion and eventual abandonment of the English migratory fishery, and its replacement by English resident fisheries supported initially by English-based mercantile firms, brought to bear fundamental processes with respect to occupancy, possession and ownership of fishing rooms. The conversion of fishing room occupation from *summer seasonal*, or *temporary possession* into *permanently held* premises turned stationary fish producers into Newfoundland residents. The near absence of supervision, inspection and enforcement of land use regulations, or indeed of any proper law enforcing agencies at Newfoundland were factors that made this possible.

## 4.2: WINTERING CREWS

It is uncertain exactly when the English adopted the practice of leaving crew members and supplies behind at Newfoundland over winter, but it had probably commenced by the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Efforts expended in the construction and dismantlement of shore infrastructure at the onset and conclusion of the inshore fishery period were frustrating for English captains. Such expenses in time and manpower effectively reduced voyage profitability. As a result, captains occasionally assigned winter caretakers, or *winterers*, to assume responsibility for goods and equipment stored at Newfoundland. Winterers were expected to prepare the fishing station for the ship's return the following spring<sup>2</sup>. They gathered wood, constructed shallops, and protected *train oil vats*<sup>3</sup>, salt stores and sundry supplies against damage or pilferage. Stored supplies and equipment generally contained identifying marks making their ownership easily verifiable. Winterers could catch and cure cod long after their ships departed, and could prepare salt fish shipments for transport the following spring. Cod caught in fall was often larger and of better quality than fish landed during summer. And operating from familiar areas enabled these fishermen to accumulate local environmental knowledge that could easily translate into increased cod catches and voyage profitability. When the ships returned the following spring, stored supplies and equipment could be easily redistributed to their owners. Instead of transporting everything back and forth

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<sup>2</sup> Griffith Williams, 'An Account of the Island of Newfoundland', 1765 in Neary 1975: 43; See also Matthews 1988: 57; Head 1964: 7

<sup>3</sup> Note: Train vats were large wooden vessels used to store cod livers that slowly decomposed into a valuable oil product.

across the Atlantic, storing supplies at Newfoundland increased the amount of space available on board ship which could often be turned to some profitable use.

#### 4.3: THE COLONIAL PERIOD

By 1604, conflict between England and Spain had finally ceased, and English companies flourished as capital was freed for colonial speculation<sup>4</sup>. A group of London investors organized by John and Humphrey Slany and William and Ralph Freeman, maintained connections in a trade network of global proportions<sup>5</sup>. These men envisioned a colonial charter for Newfoundland allowing them to generate fishery revenue, produce naval stores, mine minerals, and to explore trade possibilities with indigenous populations. Investor expectations were fulfilled on May 2, 1610 when the *Newfoundland Company* received a charter for all of Newfoundland. But it appears that the company's financial interests were confined primarily to the English Shore: a section of coastline between Cape Bonavista and Trepassey (Map 4.1). O'Flaherty explained that,

The company was granted the land south of the parallel passing by Cape Bonavista, and east of the meridian passing by Cape St. Mary's, together with 'seas and islands' within ten leagues [roughly forty-five kilometres] of the coast. . . It was, if the stated boundaries were adhered to, a sizeable territory, comprising the Avalon and Bonavista peninsulas, part of the eastern interior, and the islands off the east coast and in St. Mary's, and Placentia bays . . . the company was given 'all' the lands and islands commonly called 'Newfound Land' between latitudes 46° N and 52° – in effect, the whole island.<sup>6</sup>

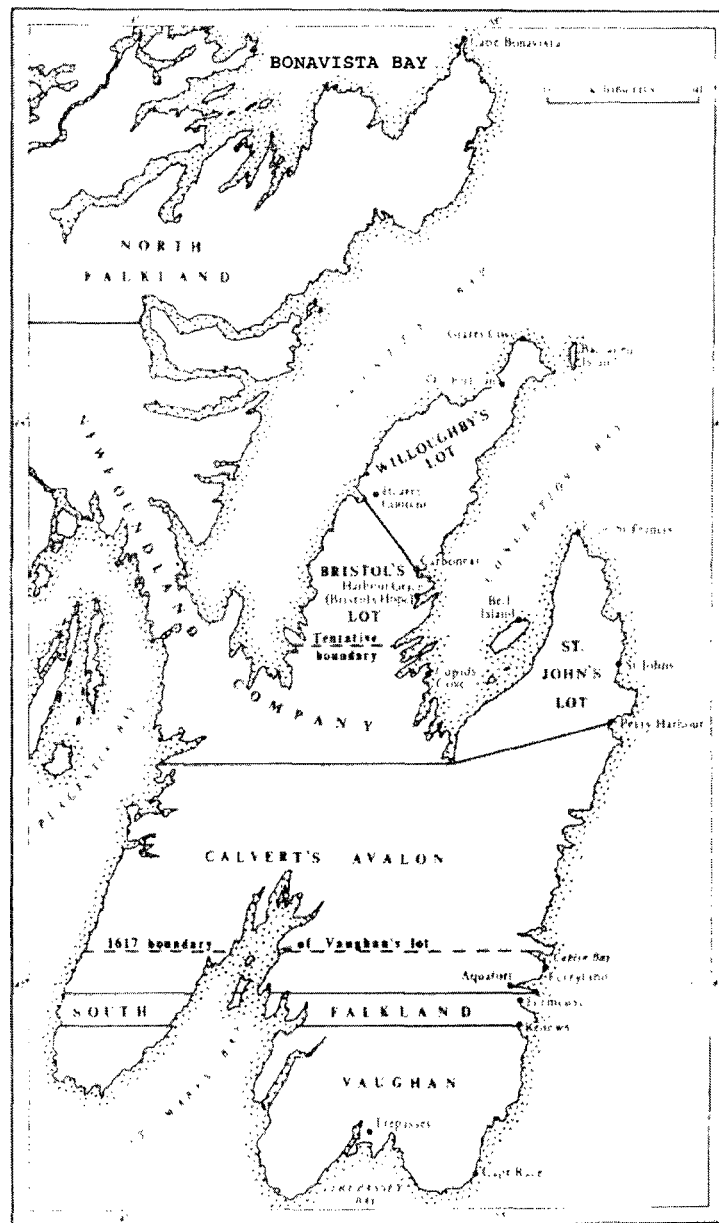
This territory included productive fishery harbours used initially by both English and continental European fishermen. Under the charter, English migratory fishermen retained preferential rights over fishing rooms established previous to 1610, but England's Privy

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<sup>4</sup> Cell 1969: 46, 97-99

<sup>5</sup> Cell 1969: 53-61; See also Cell 1983: 15

<sup>6</sup> O'Flaherty 1999: 22; See also Cell 1969: 60-62



Map 4.1: Sketch Map of the Six English Shore Colonies<sup>7</sup>

The English government hoped to diversify its Newfoundland commercial fishery interests by allowing its migratory fisheries to coexist alongside colonial ventures, or

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from Cell 1983: 21

*plantations*, along the English Shore<sup>8</sup>. Colonial enterprises relied upon personal investment rather than government subsidy, and England contained many prominent speculators, especially in London, with capital at their disposal<sup>9</sup>. Between 1616 and 1619, the Newfoundland Company issued five land grants on the Avalon Peninsula (see Map 4.1)<sup>10</sup>. Plantations based on agricultural production, however, proved difficult<sup>11</sup>. Costs for food, gear and supplies, when weighed against meagre or nonexistent financial returns, painted a bleak picture for investors and colonists alike<sup>12</sup>. Colonial ventures failed to return sufficient profit to English investors, and as these enterprises folded, some colonists elected to remain at Newfoundland. These independent salt fish producers constructed fishing rooms, buildings and flakes which enabled them to assume subsistence lifestyles based primarily upon salt fish proceeds.

English migratory fishermen would now have to share salt fish revenues with groups of independent fish producers who occupied English Shore harbours on a permanent or semi-permanent basis. For these sedentary salt fish producers, survival at Newfoundland depended upon individual effort and shore fishery access rather than support from English companies<sup>13</sup>. Thus began a period of competition for fishing room occupation between English migratory fishermen and sedentary fishery competitors.

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<sup>8</sup> Cell 1969: 46, 53-61, 97-99; Cell 1983: 15

<sup>9</sup> Matthews 1988: 61; See also Lounsbury 1969: 39

<sup>10</sup> Handcock 1989: 33; See also Matthews 1988: 63; Lounsbury 1969: 49; Bartlett 1967: 519; Cell 1969: 129; Reeves 1967: 5-8

<sup>11</sup> Cell 1983: 57-59

<sup>12</sup> Matthews 1988: 64- 65; See also Head 1976: 35; Head 1971: 52-54; Cell 1983: 12-15

<sup>13</sup> Cell 1969: 96

#### 4.4: THE WESTERN CHARTER (1634)

The first Western Charter of 1634 provides an interesting insight into early English fisheries, and specifically their ancient rights to occupy English Shore fishing rooms. The charter was intended to restore order and to promote profitability to the trans-Atlantic fishery<sup>14</sup>. Shore access privileges traditionally afforded to migratory fishermen were preserved, and the English government re-emphasized Newfoundland as a fishery base rather than a colony<sup>15</sup>. However, jurisdiction over crew conduct while at Newfoundland was placed into the hands of West Country mayors as the English government possessed no legal authority to settle disputes between migratory and sedentary fishermen<sup>16</sup>.

Since the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, English Shore harbours had contained several hundred fishing rooms that hosted both migratory and sedentary fishermen. As before, English fishing admirals received their choice of shore positions, but also received an additional boat fishing room that could be subsequently allocated or rented to another captain for the fishing season<sup>17</sup>. By contrast, sedentary fishermen were expected to operate shore fisheries outside areas reserved for migratory fishermen, or from positions which could not generally support large-scale fishery operations<sup>18</sup>.

In 1637, Sir David Kirke, along with the Marquis of Hamilton, and Earls of Pembroke and Holland, obtained a colonial patent for Newfoundland, but concentrated his operations mainly along a portion of the eastern Avalon Peninsula (see Map 4.1).

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<sup>14</sup> Lounsbury 1969: 71-74; See also Cell 1969: 112; Story 1997: 3-4; Pope 2004: 194-195, 39-40

<sup>15</sup> Hancock 1989: 25

<sup>16</sup> Matthews 1975: 71, 67-69

<sup>17</sup> Lounsbury 1969: 75; See also Buchanan 1786: 7; Matthews 1975: 75

<sup>18</sup> Bartlett 1967: 519



Only fishing ventures of similar magnitude to those employed by migratory fishermen would enable Kirke to compete for market share in the salt fish industry on a more equal footing<sup>19</sup>. Kirke realized that control over the Newfoundland fishery ultimately depended upon who occupied the best English Shore fishing rooms. In 1649, he is said to have attracted some four hundred seamen away from their naval duty to settle in his colony. This core of independent salt fish producers became known as *bye-boatkeepers*<sup>20</sup>.

Bye-boatkeepers canvassed the West Country hinterland for fishery employees, and often paid higher wages than those offered for English migratory fishery service. They used English ships to transport supplies and equipment to Newfoundland harbours, but were not otherwise affiliated with migratory ship fishermen<sup>21</sup>. The space required to transport bye-boat fishermen to Newfoundland, however, effectively reduced the numbers of ship fishermen and supplies that could be accommodated on trans-Atlantic voyages. Thus, the harvesting and fish-processing capacity of the ship was compromised as was the fishery's role as a training ground for seamen<sup>22</sup>. Kirke directed the bye-boatkeepers to preserve their collection of English Shore fishing rooms through the installation of hired employees or inhabitant fishermen who could protect stored supplies and equipment over winter, and retain lucrative English Shore coastal positions until the bye-boatkeepers returned the following spring. In this way, bye-boatkeepers challenged migratory fishery control over the Newfoundland salt fish trade.

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<sup>19</sup> Pope 2004: 40-44

<sup>20</sup> Cell 1969: 116-121

<sup>21</sup> Head 1964: 8; See also Handcock 1989: 25; Head 1976: 63

<sup>22</sup> Handcock 1989: 27; See also O'Flaherty 1999: 35; CO 199/16, f.26; Head 1976: 78

David Kirke was removed from the English Shore in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, and died in 1653. But in an enquiry held in England in 1667, he was accused of shattering the peace in the Newfoundland fishery<sup>23</sup>. He had reportedly seized fishing rooms in the best harbours, and destroyed supplies and equipment stored there by West Country fishermen. His colonists were often heavily taxed, or forced to pay exorbitant yearly rents for their fishing rooms and property. Some were encouraged to operate taverns to attract migratory fishermen away from their duties. Despite these and other charges against him, Kirke's colonial venture contributed greatly to the Newfoundland sedentary population.

#### **4.5: THE ENGLISH SHORE SEDENTARY POPULATION**

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, colonial ventures had introduced a population of sedentary salt fish producers who competed against migratory fishermen for a share of the salt fish trade. Migratory fishermen viewed the emergence of sedentary fishery competitors as detrimental to their commercial trade interests. Story remarked that this conflict,

. . . was a crucial factor in the development, or rather in the failure to develop normally, of the Island's English [fishing] communities. Newfoundland became a unique example of deliberately retarded colonization, and its villages, such as they were, grew surreptitiously under the shadow of official British disapproval and even harassment, as much by fellow-Englishmen as by foreign foe<sup>24</sup>.

West Country fishermen had a powerful lobby group in London which tried hard to affect how Newfoundland was to be developed. Under the Western Charter (1634), the English government supported migratory fishery claims regarding control over the network of English Shore fishing rooms. By mid-century, however, sedentary fishermen

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<sup>23</sup> Cell 1969: 123

<sup>24</sup> Story 1997: 2

became increasingly vulnerable to the migratory fishery system land use restrictions. Unfortunately, this position would guide the formulation of Newfoundland policy for years to come. Matthews commented that by 1634,

. . . the English government was faced with a situation in which settlers and visiting fishermen were living in Newfoundland under no formal jurisdiction whatsoever. There were perennial disputes and conflicts within the fishery, and the government was unable to control the situation<sup>25</sup>.

Some form of permanent or semi-permanent settlement could exist at Newfoundland if the stationary fishery operations were left undisturbed and salt fish production could be bartered for supplies and equipment. English Shore inhabitants could either seek employment with migratory fishermen during summer, or become a new breed of entrepreneur called a *planter*<sup>26</sup>. Planters were often former colonists or migratory fishermen who possessed sufficient inshore fishery experience and capital to establish independent fishing rooms operating from one to several shallops each<sup>27</sup>. Planter fisheries often employed servants and labourers to enhance their scale of fishery activity. However, an inability to gain legal ownership over their fishing rooms meant that these operations needed to be conducted somewhat clandestinely. For inhabitants, continued occupation of fishing rooms demanded either a strong affiliation with fishing admirals, or the good sense to site their operations on foreshore considered of lesser value for migratory fisheries<sup>28</sup>. Bye-boatkeepers operated at a similar scale to planters, and were equally dependent upon the migratory fishery for transportation and trade

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<sup>25</sup> Matthews 1975: 67-68

<sup>26</sup> Bannister 2003: 10; See also Head 1976: 18; Pope 2004: 22-23; O'Flaherty 1999: 36

<sup>27</sup> Pope 2004: 41

<sup>28</sup> O'Flaherty 1999: 36

connections in Europe<sup>29</sup>. As a result, independent salt fish producers learned to ‘keep their heads down’ whenever hordes of migratory fishermen descended on English Shore harbours.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the shadowy emergence of a *truck system* of credit emerged to facilitate the exchange of English goods and equipment for local salt fish production<sup>30</sup>. This system, contrived and supported by English merchant firms, made independent fish producers subservient to the trans-Atlantic salt fish trade, and increasingly vulnerable to European market fluctuations. Inshore fisheries were already affected by the natural cod abundance cycles, overseas supply shipping interruptions, labour costs, etc. A bad fishing year or two could prove devastating for sedentary fishermen who found themselves unable to afford adequate winter food and supplies. Such challenges became integral to the lives and fortunes of English Shore inhabitant fisheries.

West Country merchants enjoyed an eminent status in Newfoundland affairs through their active role in labour recruitment<sup>31</sup>, and strong control over the prices paid for salt fish which, in turn, depended upon its quality, or *grade*. Credit realized by sedentary fish producers through these transactions were used to settle outstanding debt, and to purchase winter provisions, clothing and equipment. Accounts were generally settled at season’s end as salt fish cargoes were readied for shipment. When sales of salt fish, cod oil, and sundry trade staples failed to cover his debts, a planter could negotiate for necessities on credit provided his regular fishery performance warranted the risk.

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<sup>29</sup> Prowse (1895) 2002: 297

<sup>30</sup> Story 1997: 11

<sup>31</sup> Matthews 1988: 56; See also Handcock 1989: 216, 14

Merchants could decide to extend credit to fishermen coping with inshore fishery downturns, or during periods when trans-Atlantic supply shipping was interrupted<sup>32</sup>. Fishermen incurring substantial debt loads risked losing gear and supplies to creditors thus compromising their participation in the salt fish trade, and even their chances for survival<sup>33</sup>.

#### **4.6: THE SECOND WESTERN CHARTER (1661)**

The second Western Charter, issued on January 26, 1661, did not differ markedly from the first, but contained an additional clause concerning the bye-boat fishermen that were introduced by David Kirke<sup>34</sup>. Special regulations were introduced which limited the numbers of bye-boat fishermen transported aboard English vessels, and their access to Newfoundland fishing rooms. The new charter created three fishing admiralty positions (admiral, vice-admiral, and rear admiral) for each English Shore harbour where previously there had been one<sup>35</sup>.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Newfoundland fishery reflected a multi-tier commercial system that was strongly connected to the fishing room. Migratory fishermen enjoyed years of practical Newfoundland fishery experience, and maintained a traditional claim to occupy fishing rooms of proven commercial value. They held the strength of numbers and political prominence in the salt fish trade to ensure that fishing admiralty system regulations were respected. Bye-boat keepers came to the English Shore to earn profit,

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<sup>32</sup> Handcock 1989: 233; See also Bannister 2003: 9

<sup>33</sup> Anspach 1819: 151-152

<sup>34</sup> Bartlett 1967: 519-520; See also C.O. 1/15 in Matthews 1975: 129-131

<sup>35</sup> Matthews 1988: 49-50

but often returned to England after the fishing season to conduct their own salt fish trade. Planters operated at a similar scale to bye-boat fishermen, but used their salt fish revenues to support families and full-time servants at Newfoundland. As a result, their attachment to fishing rooms and the Newfoundland coastal environment was considerable. At the bottom of the shore fishery pyramid were the footloose fishery labourers who accepted employment wherever it could be found. As the English Shore population increased, it became increasingly difficult for planters, bye-boat keepers and fishery labourers to secure access to viable fishing rooms. As a result, sedentary fisheries were often relegated to occupying coastal positions of lesser commercial value than those managed under the system of fishing admirals (Image 4.1).

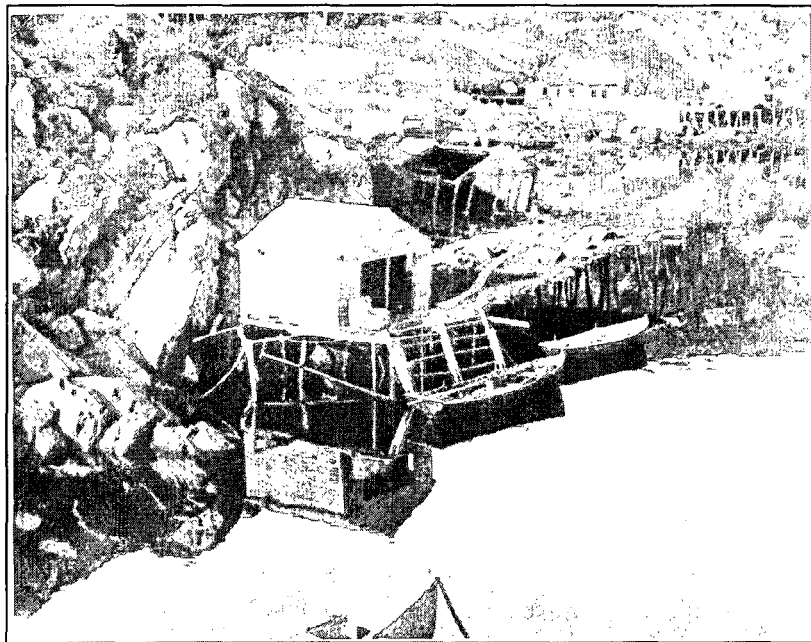


Image 4.1: Newfoundland Fishing Room, (ca. 1938)<sup>36</sup>

English Shore settlement was neither sanctioned nor protected under English law. Consequently, its continued existence relied upon maintaining a peaceful coexistence

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<sup>36</sup> Photograph va 7-89, Stanley and Betty Brooks, 1938, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador-CMCS

with both English merchants and a powerful force of migratory fishery competitors. An examination of 1644 fishery data provides some insight into English fishing room occupation. Prowse wrote:

There were 270 ships annually employed in the Newfoundland fishery [in 1644] besides those who brought salt and carried the fish [sack ships] to market computing the ships at 80 tons each and for every 100 tons 50 men and 10 boats. There were in all 21,600 tons 10,800 seamen 2,160 boats. To each boat is allowed 5 men. Usual catch 200-300 qtls. [10,886 kg- 16,329 kg]. . .<sup>37</sup>

West Country fishermen thus operated 270 fishing ships, and maintained control over 2,160 English Shore shallop rooms employing some 10,800 men during the inshore fishery period. For example, if we assign an equal number of ships to the fifteen English Shore harbours, each would accommodate 18 ships (270 ships divided by 15 harbours), and contain 144 boat rooms (2160 rooms divided by 15). Twenty-six fishing rooms would be occupied by admirals leaving one hundred and eighteen free for distribution among the shore crews of the remaining fifteen ships (15 ships x 8 shallop crews). These figures assume that all harbours were spacious enough to contain large-scale fishery operations. In practice, however, few harbours could support such intensive fishery effort. Sedentary fishermen vied for shore space alongside migratory fishermen, but we might expect that these operations were often relegated to positions of marginal inshore fishery quality. The 1644 data does not contain statistics for sedentary fishermen, but we might assume, based on contemporary population figures, that approximately one hundred planter fisheries operated from English Shore harbours at this time<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Prowse (1895) 2002: 190

<sup>38</sup> See Plate 4.4, Newfoundland Population Data for 1675

The English government became concerned with the supposed increase in illegal English Shore settlement, and issued an Order in Council dated 1671. It stipulated that sedentary fishermen be withdrawn to positions six miles [8 km] from shore, and prohibited from harvesting wood, erecting houses, or occupying fishing rooms until migratory fishery needs had been properly satisfied<sup>39</sup>. Lounsbury suggests that such draconian regulations were an attempt to address fishery grievances arising during David Kirke's colonial tenure<sup>40</sup>. Despite this, sedentary fishermen were probably allowed to maintain fishing rooms provided that their site and routine operations did not interfere with migratory fishermen. At this time, however, there was no legal authority installed at Newfoundland to implement such legal prescriptions.

#### **4.7: COMMODORE JOHN BERRY**

By the mid to late 17<sup>th</sup> century, West Country firms were registering complaints at London regarding sedentary fishery *abuses* committed against migratory fishermen. Stationary fishermen were accused of dismantling fishing rooms, destroying or pilfering stored supplies, and taking possession of choice fishing rooms. Along with sundry lawless acts, English merchants accused sedentary fishermen of enclosing shoreline that was considered property exclusive to migratory fishermen<sup>41</sup>. In 1675, Commodore John Berry was dispatched to the English Shore to investigate these allegations, to collect

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<sup>39</sup> McEwen 1978: 23; See also O'Flaherty 1999: 32-33; Cell 1969: 114-117

<sup>40</sup> Lounsbury 1969: 81

<sup>41</sup> O'Flaherty 1999: 29



census data, and to begin evacuating the sedentary population<sup>42</sup>. However, Berry's first-hand appraisal of the situation revealed that the sedentary population was far less guilty of impeding shore fishery operations than the migratory fishermen claimed. Berry soon realized that these accusations were most often grossly exaggerated, or blatantly untrue.

Captain Berry learned that English ship captains sometimes convinced their crewmen to seek winter employment with planters which contributed significantly to Newfoundland's resident population<sup>43</sup>. In his report to the English government, Berry made it clear that Newfoundland already supported a fixed population, and that these people had been unjustly treated by migratory fishermen for years<sup>44</sup>. Again, regulations were needed to resolve issues between visiting and stationary fishermen, and their respective access to English Shore harbours.

Berry's examination of English Shore settlement included the first reliable accounting of the size and distribution of Newfoundland's population (see Map 4.2). His nominal census data encompassed twenty-nine settlements situated between Trepassey and Salvage, Bonavista Bay: an area supporting 114 planters, 231 women (including planter wives, housekeepers and women over the age of majority) and children, 1022 servants, and 543 head of cattle<sup>45</sup>. The resident population produced 347,505 quintals of salted cod per year based upon an estimate of 150 quintals per boat.

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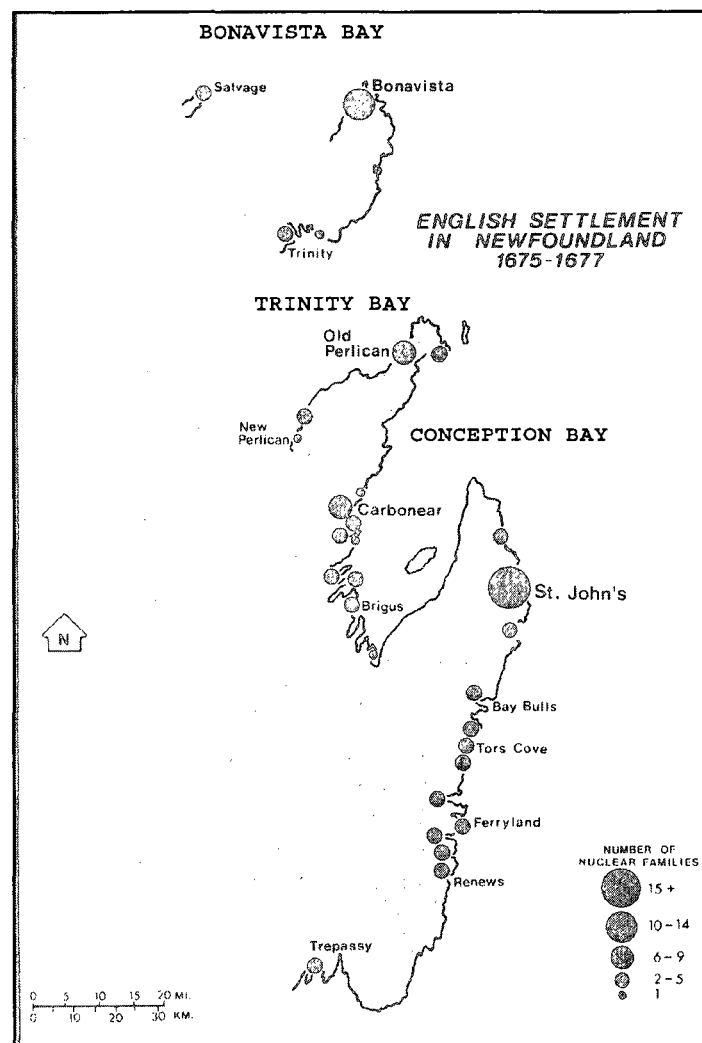
<sup>42</sup> Lounsbury 1969: 149-150; See also Pope 2004 66-70; McEwen 1978: 23; O'Flaherty 1999: 43-44; Head 1971: 55-59; Handcock 1989: 37

<sup>43</sup> Reeves 1967: 21-23

<sup>44</sup> Lounsbury 1969: 181

<sup>45</sup> Berry 1675: A/1/2, 149v-156; See also Russell 1676: 237-238; Note: Berry's census (1675) covered harbours from Trepassey and Bonavista while Russell's censuses of 1676 and 1677 also included Salvage.

The English government was forced to admit that both migratory fishermen and the salt fish trade in general actually benefited from sedentary fishery assistance. However, the government was concerned that its migratory fisheries and salt fish trade monopoly would be seriously compromised if a greater proportion of the total Newfoundland salt fish production was assumed by inhabitant fishermen. Therefore, regulations were needed to “rationalize the pattern of fishing room ownership and allocation”<sup>46</sup>.



Map 4.2: English Shore Settlement, 1675-1677<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Matthews 1975: 20; See also Lounsbury 1969: 153

<sup>47</sup> Hancock 1977: 17, Note: This figure is based upon census information collected during Captain John Berry's voyage to Newfoundland in 1675. See also Russell's census information from 1676 and 1677.

In an ironic twist, Newfoundland's sedentary population became England's best hope to preserve its sovereign hold over the island, and its shore fisheries<sup>48</sup>. An Order in Council, issued in 1677, suspended the re-settlement of the Newfoundland sedentary population, and removed restrictions which limited the transport of potential settlers and bye-boat keepers aboard English ships<sup>49</sup>. The English government wanted to protect her overseas industries against foreign and colonial competitors, but realized that only an established sedentary population could legitimize its territorial claim to Newfoundland. This was especially true at a time when French fisheries operating outside the English Shore were becoming more established<sup>50</sup>. The English government, therefore, decided to recognize the existing sedentary population, but it fell short of granting Newfoundland full colonial status<sup>51</sup>. The population that West Country merchants fought so hard to banish now represented England's best hope to preserve its Newfoundland fishery and territorial interests.

#### **4.8: THE NEWFOUNDLAND ACT (1699)**

King William's Act, presented as 'An Act to Encourage the Trade to Newfoundland' or the *Newfoundland Act*, was introduced in 1699<sup>52</sup>. In keeping with Western Charter initiatives, the Act again reinstated the system of fishing admirals, and their control over a network of fishing rooms that had been established, improved and

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<sup>48</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: 48

<sup>49</sup> Matthews 1975: 193

<sup>50</sup> Head 1976: 39

<sup>51</sup> Bannister 2003: 19

<sup>52</sup> Matthews 1975: 202-218

utilized over roughly two centuries of English migratory fishery activity<sup>53</sup>. It allowed migratory fishermen to collect bait and repair stages, but legislated against the destruction of Newfoundland forests and fishing rooms, and the ruination or pilferage of stored goods and gear<sup>54</sup>. Fishing ships were expected to incorporate inexperienced, *green* men at a rate of one for every five crew members to ensure the fishery fulfilled its role as a training ground for seamen. Sunday was to remain a day of rest when crewmembers were advised to attend church services, and to abstain from alcohol. Clause Four of the Act reinstated the admiral, vice-admiral, and rear admiral shore positions contained in the second Western Charter. An English captain had to select his fishing rooms within forty-eight hours of his arrival at Newfoundland. He was responsible for securing shore space for each shallop crew under his charge which sometimes involved disbursing shore crews among several fishing harbours. In 1786, Archibald Buchanan wrote:

Such spots as had been made use of by the Crews of Fishing Ships before the year 1685 are reserved as a sort of common property belonging, without distinction, to the Fishermen annually arriving from England, and such Spots, as Individuals have shared for their own use since that time, are considered as the certain and indisputable property of those who have cleared them<sup>55</sup>.

Under the act, prohibitions against planters establishing fishing rooms within six miles of shore were removed, and were replaced “by provisions that recognized the possessory rights of those inhabitants who had occupied land for a specified period”<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> Bannister 2003: 30; See also Head 1976: 146

<sup>54</sup> “An Act To Encourage The Trade To Newfoundland” (1698/9), Statutes 10 and 11 William III, Cap.25 in Matthews 1975: 204-217

<sup>55</sup> Buchanan 1786: 2; See also Anspach 1819: 139-140

<sup>56</sup> McEwen 1978: 36

Fishing rooms occupied for an uninterrupted period of several years prior to 1699 could be possessed under a form of conditional private property ownership<sup>57</sup>.

**The Newfoundland Act was predicated upon the fishing room, and provided legislation whereby these English Shore commercial properties received conditional formal recognition for its owners under English law.** It attempted to regulate the Newfoundland fishery, but did not necessarily disturb a sedentary fisherman's practical use of shore space<sup>58</sup>. The sedentary population could only establish shore fisheries outside shores used by migratory fishermen, or near more marginally productive inshore fishing grounds. But, only areas that migratory fishermen had not claimed previous to 1685 were to be made available for sedentary fishery occupation. While the Act recognized a growing inhabitant population at Newfoundland and their contributions to the overseas salt fish trade, their need to occupy viable fishing rooms was not recognized. In fact, the Act most clearly defined where the local fishermen inhabitants *could not* establish fishing rooms<sup>59</sup>. McEwen suggests that the Newfoundland Act was England's "first statutory acknowledgement" of private property ownership in Newfoundland, but it merely concerned shore space that could be held "quietly" by stationary fishermen<sup>60</sup>. These included a number of existing fishing rooms which sometimes contained extensive infrastructure including dwelling houses, livestock shelters, kitchen gardens, etc.<sup>61</sup>. Some

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<sup>57</sup> Buchanan 1786: 6, notes

<sup>58</sup> O'Flaherty 1999: 57, 55

<sup>59</sup> McEwen 1978: 136

<sup>60</sup> McEwen 1978: 34, 83-84

<sup>61</sup> Lounsbury 1969: 206-207

of these fishing premises contained shore infrastructure of suitable size and quality to be rented to migratory fishermen for the season<sup>62</sup>.

Policy introduced in the Newfoundland Act (1699), was designed to protect England's commercial interests, and emphasized the English Shore's primary usage as a base for migratory fishery operations. England had adeptly secured its economic interests at Newfoundland, and managed to assuage the industry's fishing room occupation concerns by granting migratory fishermen complete jurisdiction over their own network of English Shore fishing rooms. While the Act attempted to appease both visiting and stationary fisheries, it probably triggered a re-organization of English Shore land use by forcing sedentary fishermen to instigate tenure property claims in areas outside migratory fishery jurisdiction.

#### **4.9: 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY ENGLISH SHORE POPULATION GROWTH**

The Newfoundland population experienced dramatic fluctuations each year. In summer, Newfoundland shores hosted a massive in-migration of migratory fishermen who operated fishing rooms from the most productive English Shore harbours. Shore crews were comprised mainly of young, single men who were highly mobile, and returned to England after the inshore fishery ended. The Newfoundland wintering population was comprised of "large numbers of young male servants attached to merchants and planters", a number of which had successfully secured fishing room property rights after the Newfoundland Act's introduction in 1699. Fishing rooms often contained elaborate shore infrastructures, and employed a number of servants and

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<sup>62</sup> Anspach 1819: 176-177

dependents who managed boat fisheries and helped with salt fish processing duties. Certainly the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, Newfoundland's sedentary population represented a clear and rising majority of the Newfoundland European (English) population (Figure 4.1).

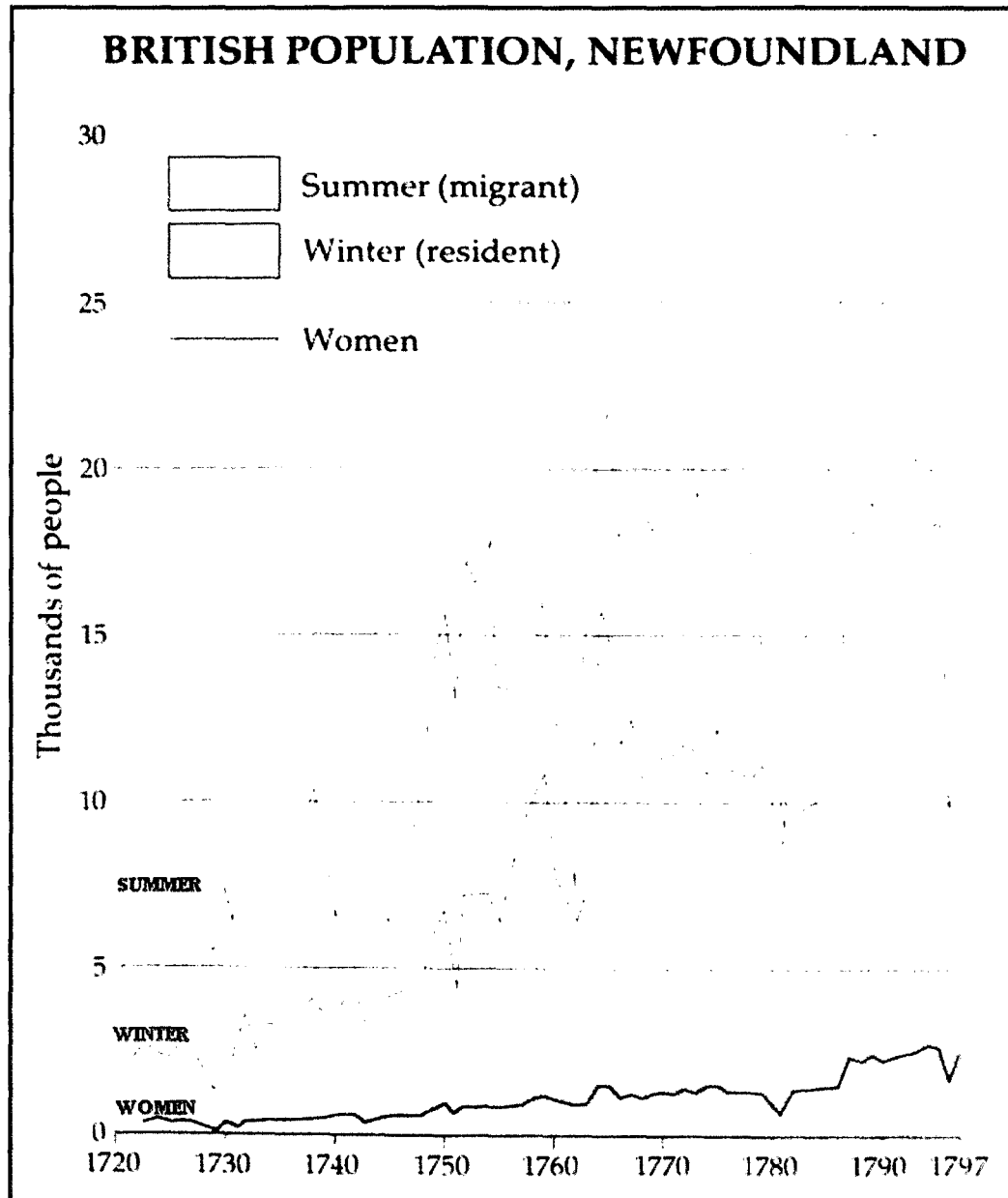


Figure 4.1: English Population for Newfoundland, 1720-1797<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: Plate 25; Note: This figure has been adapted to more clearly associate the summer, winter, and women populations with their respective positions on the graph.

Gradually, Newfoundland's sedentary population incorporated bye-boat keepers and numbers of young, single men who were formerly employed as migratory fishermen. Head reported that Newfoundland's sedentary population,

. . . had numbered around 1200 in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, and had grown to 3500 by about 1730. Through the next four decades, this component of the total population increased to reach 7300 by the 1750s and nearly 12,000 before the American Revolution<sup>64</sup>.

The late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century marked a period of great upheaval for England and France. Periods of Anglo-French war affected the overseas fishery, and sometimes extended to Newfoundland coasts. Interruptions in trade and supply shipping brought hardship for the local population, but created opportunities as well. Sedentary fishermen took full advantage of migratory fishery absences to explore and exploit fishing grounds that were usually denied them. European hostilities also created an insatiable demand for salt fish, especially for use in naval victualling. The uncertainties encountered in north Atlantic travel, when weighed against the economic opportunities available in the relative safety of English Shore fishing harbours, convinced many people to seek their fortunes in the Newfoundland shore fishery. The Historical Atlas of Canada states that,

With the ebb and flow of men employed in the migratory and residential fisheries, the population of Newfoundland fluctuated markedly throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Winter populations included large numbers of young male servants attached to merchants and planters. Summer populations were inflated by the arrival of ship fishermen, by-boatmen, and freshly engaged planters' men<sup>65</sup>.

Handcock explains that seasonal migration occurred as a surrogate factor of the migratory fishery's mercantilist exploitation of Newfoundland. The low percentage of females in the Newfoundland prior to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century represented a retarding factor

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<sup>64</sup> Head 1976: 82, 37

<sup>65</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: Plate 25



in the population growth rate<sup>66</sup>. Eighteenth century female population increases initiated an expansion of Newfoundland's sedentary population as women emigrated to marry planters, raise families, and to assume vital roles within the salt fish industry. As growing numbers of women immigrated to Newfoundland, the stationary population achieved both stability and growth potential. Fishing rooms provided an economic framework whereby families and servants could support themselves (Figure 4.2).

A planter operated at least one boat, and to do so required five men (three to fish, two to process the fish ashore) and a shore property that included a dwelling, stage, wharf, flakes (drying platforms), and outbuildings, and, usually a small vegetable garden. Such properties were scattered in outharbours along the [Canada's east] coast<sup>67</sup>.

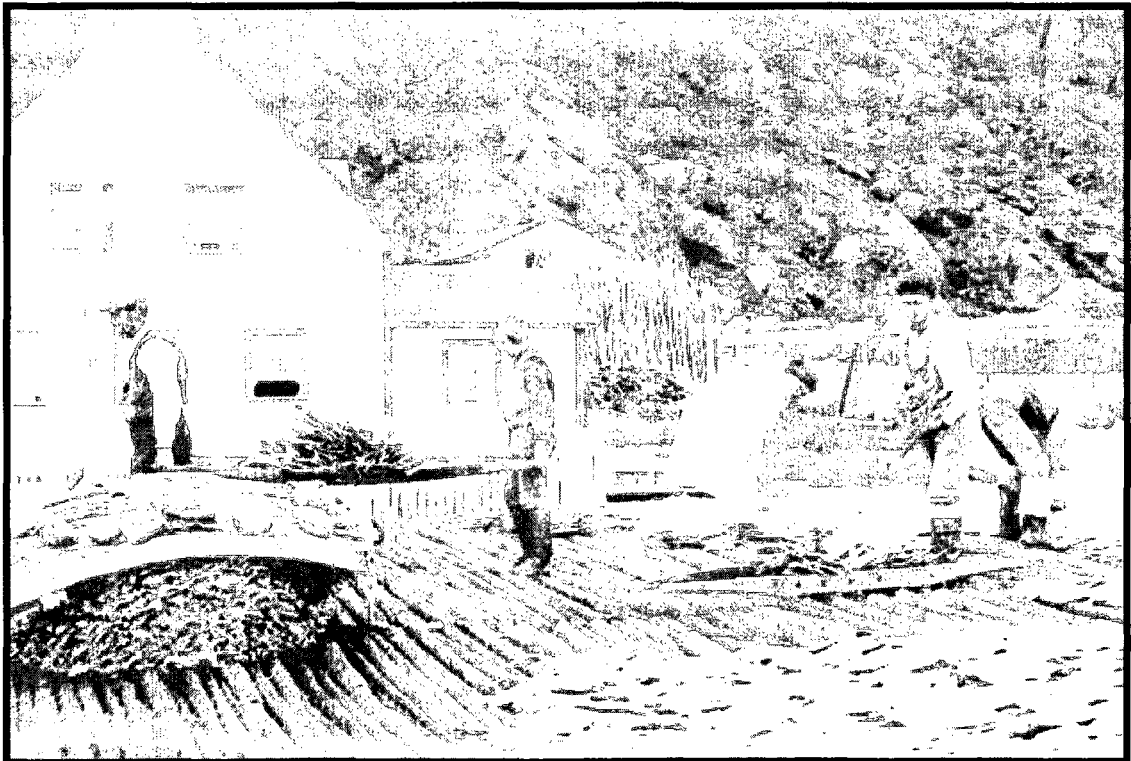


Image 4.2: A Family-Based English Fishing Room Operation<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Hancock 1977: 24

<sup>67</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: Plate 26

<sup>68</sup> Photograph iga25-168, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador

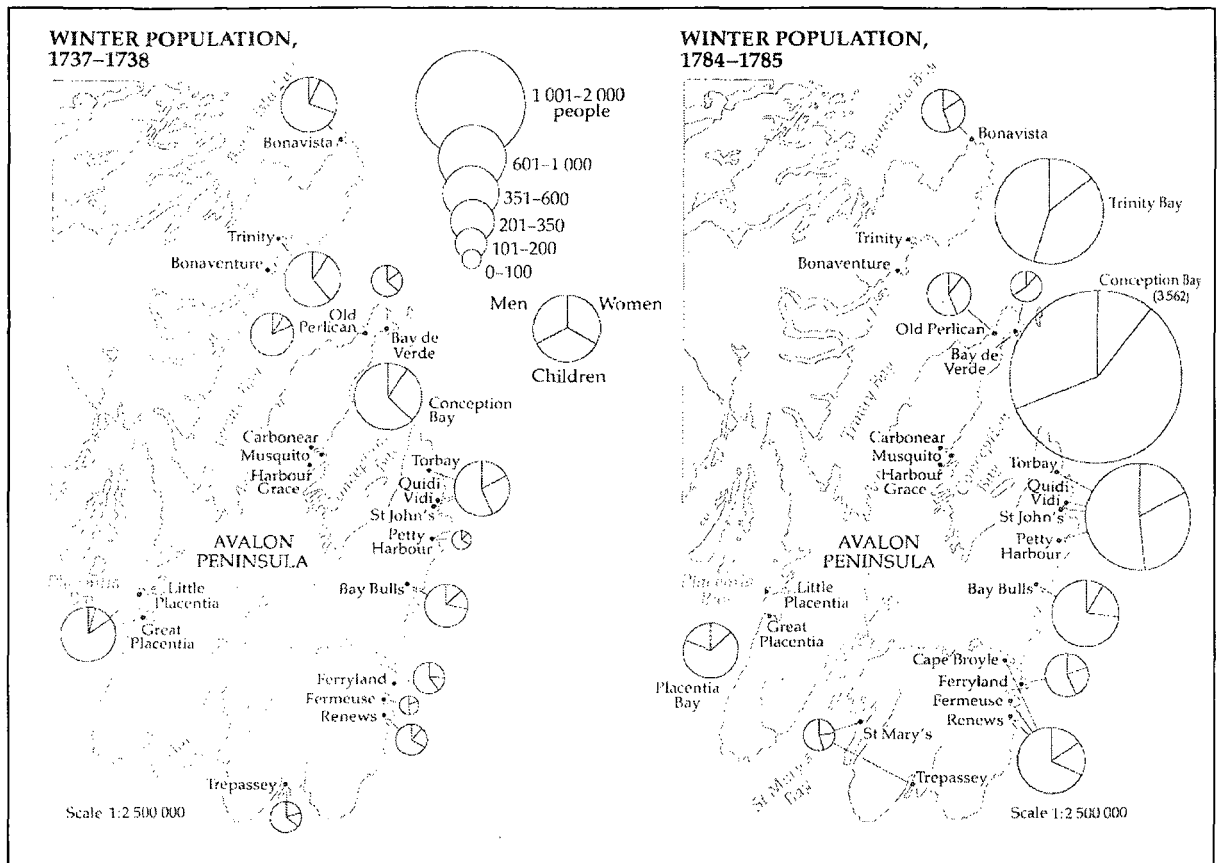


Figure 4.2: Newfoundland's Wintering Population, 1737-1738, 1784-1785<sup>69</sup>

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the sedentary, *wintering* population (Figure 4.2) gained majority control over Newfoundland's salt fish production (Figure 4.3). Salt fish contributions by bye-boat fishermen appears to decline during this period, but in fact it is the result of their numbers being absorbed into the inhabitant population. Sedentary fishermen gradually assumed a greater proportion of Newfoundland's salt fish production. As the sedentary population steadily increased, competition for English Shore inshore cod stocks and fishing room space intensified. As a result, it became increasingly difficult for small-scale fisheries to secure access to inshore cod stocks and shore space.

<sup>69</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: Plate 25

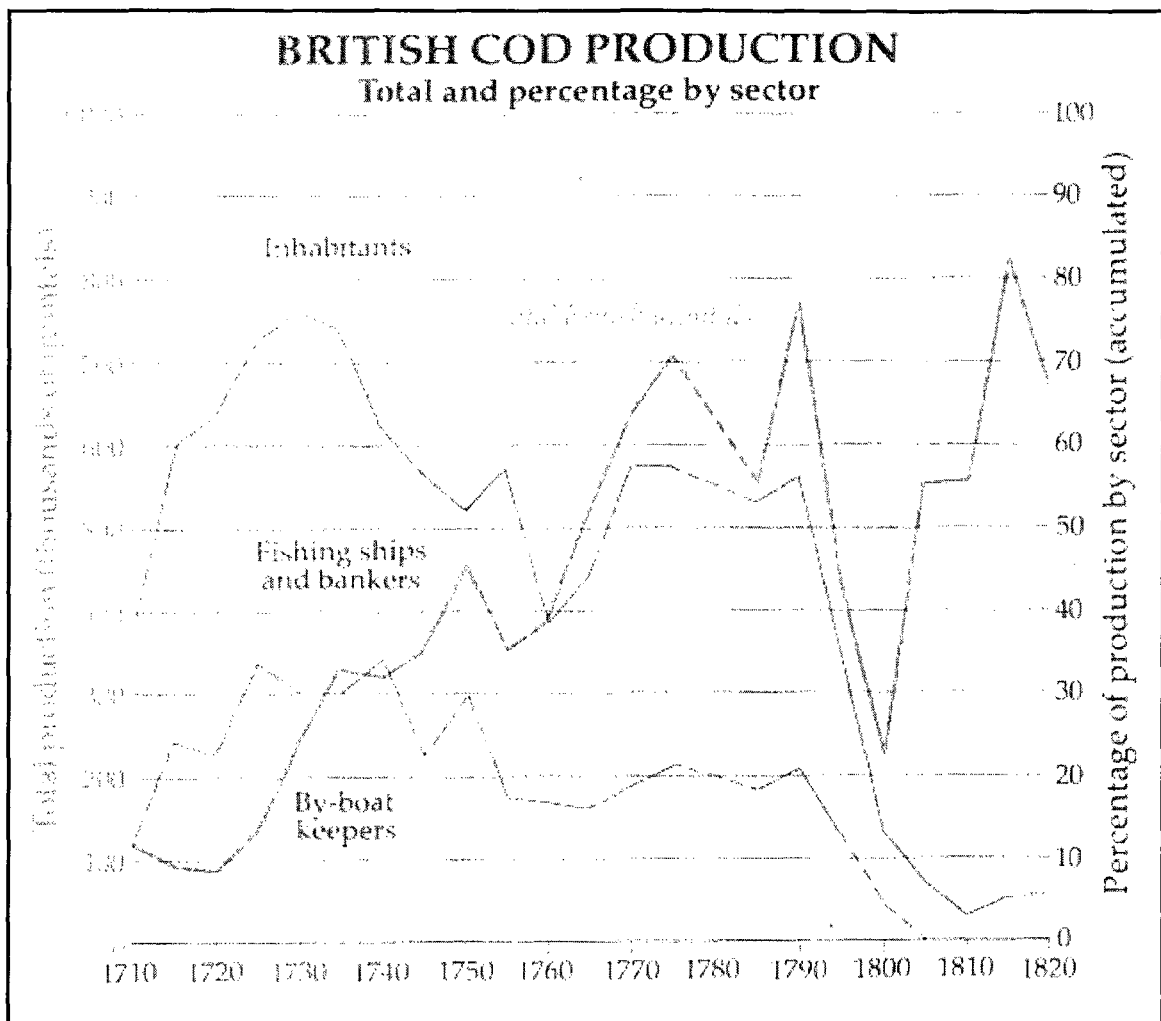


Figure 4.3: English Cod Production at Newfoundland, 1710-1820<sup>70</sup>

In the following chapter, we will explore the emergence of property law in Newfoundland, and specifically its impact upon English sedentary fishermen whose well-being was intimately connected with fishing room possession. We will also examine the state of Anglo-French relations during an extended period of unrest, and its impact on both migratory and stationary fisheries along the coast of Newfoundland.

<sup>70</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, Plate 25

## **CHAPTER 5.0: THE INFLUENCE OF PROPERTY LAW AND ANGLO-FRENCH TREATIES ON THE NEWFOUNDLAND SETTLEMENT PROCESS**

### **5.1: INTRODUCTION**

The fisheries of 1699-1762 were often interrupted by periods of Anglo-French war which made the trans-Atlantic salt fish and supply trades erratic. But this situation enabled English fishermen to become more firmly entrenched in more northern areas of Newfoundland<sup>1</sup>. In Bonavista Bay, sedentary fishermen maintained a network of fishing rooms that they cleared and operated, sometimes for a considerable time prior to 1699. By 1681, Bonavista Bay already supported a number of planter fisheries that were distributed among several small settlements<sup>2</sup>. Its summer population comprised sixty-seven English fishermen who established fishing rooms that were somewhat isolated from the mainland, and from salmon rivers harvested by Beothuks<sup>3</sup>. But the English maintained a number of Bonavista Bay fishing rooms from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, and this fragile population slowly increased during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Head adds that,

“... in 1729 Henry Jones, the missionary at the time, reported 200 would winter at Bonavista; the Scheme of the Fishery reports 383 winterers for the whole of the bay about this time, so perhaps something more than half the population was resident at Bonavista town and the rest in the smaller settlements on the Bonavista peninsula, and the archipelago to the northward.”<sup>4</sup>.

For the English at Newfoundland, a fishing room's value was determined ultimately by its proximity to inshore cod stocks, and its suitability to contain both fishery infrastructure and accommodation for shore fishery crews. The fishing room was also

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<sup>1</sup> Handcock 1977: 23

<sup>2</sup> Pope 2004: 217

<sup>3</sup> Head 1971: 85; See also Handcock 2003: 112

<sup>4</sup> Head 1976: 285, See also Handcock 1989: 117

shaped to a degree by English enactments designed to regulate the fishery. The Western Charters and Newfoundland Act (1699), as discussed in Chapter Four, defined the access rights of the migratory and sedentary fishery to occupy English Shore harbours. This, in effect, merely formalized an existing land use pattern. However, the fishing room was also shaped by the evolution of Anglo-French treaties through the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These treaties instigated distinct English and French shore fishery zones along selected coastal areas, and thus contributed to the movement and distribution of Newfoundland's English settlement.

## **5.2: NEWFOUNDLAND PROPERTY LAW**

Fishing rooms were not the product of foreign land use systems superimposed upon a varied coastal landscape designed to accommodate the needs of a transplanted population<sup>5</sup>. Fishing rooms throughout eastern Canada evolved under a commercial land use system where common property coastal space was managed among participating groups of migratory or stationary shore fishermen. However, various statutes and treaties did contribute an opportunity for sedentary fishermen to secure conditional, proprietary rights to fishing rooms that were to be maintained as active shore fishery bases.

Newfoundland's coastal development of fishing rooms differed significantly from other Canadian regions in that it was not the result of European land use patterns transposed arbitrarily upon the landscape to provide a framework for settlement. For example, the *seigneurial* land grants along the St. Lawrence River favoured the *long lot*

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<sup>5</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: 49-50

design that provided settlers with river access, homesteading space and agricultural land<sup>6</sup>. Settlers rented these long lots or *habitations* from landlords, but these property rights remained subject to conditions in the original deed. “As long as they paid the seigneurial charges, their tenures were secure; their land could be inherited, deeded or sold, but not detached from the seigneurial obligations in the title deed”<sup>7</sup>. The Historical Atlas of Canada includes several examples of land use patterns that were used to organize settlements in frontier landscapes<sup>8</sup>. Figure 5.1 illustrates the importance of foreshore access, especially in areas that could support intensive inshore fishery pressure.



Image 5.1: Fishing Rooms at Pouch Cove, Newfoundland (ca. 193?)<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: 50

<sup>7</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: 115

<sup>8</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: Plate 23-17<sup>th</sup> Century Fisheries; Plate 26- Trinity, 18<sup>th</sup> Century; Plate 27- St. John's, 1728; Plate 51- Seigneuries; Plate 52- The Countryside; Plate 62- Trading Posts, 1774-1821; Plate 64- Fur Trade Settlements

<sup>9</sup> Photograph b3-225, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador-CMCS

The English migratory fishery cultivated strong political and economic connections in London to ensure that their overseas commercial interests received preferential treatment whenever charters, acts and policy were being considered. However, the English government offered sedentary fishermen property rights as a means of protecting its sovereign and commercial interests at Newfoundland. Only these measures would protect English fishing harbours from foreign encroachment<sup>10</sup>.

A fishing room's primary function was for shore fishery activity of varying scale: the closer to the fish the better (see Image 5.1). However, fishing rooms often occupied exposed coastal spaces that were virtually denuded of vegetation, and supported only a thin layer of acidic, rocky soil. Most planter families, to supplement their diet, maintained tiny gardens that were situated some distance from the drying flakes, or found outside the fishing room altogether. Despite their variable size and limited agricultural potential, fishing rooms would become the basic element of Newfoundland settlement.

On the Atlantic coasts small-scale subsistence farming prevailed. The roughness of the land and labour-intensive character of the fishery limited most families to fewer than 3 acres (1.2 ha) of improved land, enough essentially for a small "kitchen garden" and a patch of meadow, fertilized with [fish] offal and seaweed, to sustain a cow or two.<sup>11</sup>

### **5.3: THE FISHING ROOM PROPERTY CLAIM PROCESS**

While Newfoundland hosted various forms of semi-permanent and permanent settlement for much of its early history, sedentary fishermen held no proprietary rights to English Shore territory prior to 1699. However, an illegal or unsanctioned form of settlement had existed at Newfoundland for nearly three hundred years before private

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<sup>10</sup> Hancock 1977: 16

<sup>11</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 2: Plate 12

property rights for inhabitants was recognized. The Newfoundland Act (1699) offered inhabitants an opportunity to gain conditional property ownership over fishing rooms situated outside areas managed seasonally by migratory fishermen. English Shore inhabitants often established fishing rooms illegally hoping that their actions would remain unchallenged. Bannister pointed out that “the right to own real property was not formally recognized until the nineteenth century”, and that “settlers enjoyed the right of possession *vaut titre* except in special cases where the courts found a property to be a direct nuisance to the [migratory] fishery”<sup>12</sup>. Head suggested that Newfoundland inhabitants elected to possess their fishing rooms until they lost the privilege.

With access to legal aid essentially impossible for the residents, and with the great economic and physical force of the merchants and migratory adventurers present, the usual situation was probably quiet occupance of land without formal title. . . until someone stronger saw need to appropriate it.<sup>13</sup>

McEwen stated, “The evolution of land titles in Newfoundland is an inseparable part of the struggle towards settlement and self-government”<sup>14</sup>. He adds that,

. . . from the early and short-lived royal charters, through restrictive statutes, the arbitrary and often conflicting discussions of colonial governors with respect to possession of property, to the emergence in the mid-nineteenth century of a general right to own land in Newfoundland.<sup>15</sup>

Under the Newfoundland Act (1699), a fishing room that was occupied continuously since 1685 could, under certain conditions, attain legal property status. Head explains:

According to clause 7 of this [Newfoundland] act, property occupied by inhabitants before or in the year 1685, as well as that taken up by them at any time in the future, but not used by fishing ships between 1685 and 1698, was to

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<sup>12</sup> Bannister 2003: 125, 133

<sup>13</sup> Head 1976:146; McEwen 1978: 21

<sup>14</sup> McEwen 1978: 2

<sup>15</sup> McEwen 1978: 2



be theirs. To fishing ships cleared out of England in the traditional fashion was to be given title for one season only, to those lands that had been used by fishing ships between 1685 and 1698, a time mainly of a war-reduced ship fishery.<sup>16</sup>

English inhabitants who operated fishing rooms between 1685 and 1699 were thus entitled to “quietly and peacefully enjoy” them. A planter could establish a fishing room on any unused coastal space, and possess it indefinitely provided it was continually used for shore fishery activity. If a fishing room were abandoned for one year, the property claim became void, and the site could be taken over by another party. The English government reserved the right to reclaim any fishing rooms that were not used regularly and consistently for fishery-related activity. McEwen stated that a fisherman’s room established and operated successfully over several years constituted a property title<sup>17</sup>.

The conclusion reached by [Chief Justice John] Reeves [ca. 1793] was that exclusive property titles must lie either in grant or in occupation, since statutory titles could not be proved and ships’ rooms were a right of common and not title. But whatever the title rights of the Crown, owners *inter se* could sell, lease and mortgage their lands as in other territories under English jurisdiction.<sup>18</sup>

Bannister echoes Archibald Buchanan’s view that,

The property in land, thus established, may be conveyed to heirs, may be devised by will, may be disposed of by sale, may be let to tenants, may be adjudged to creditors in payment of debt- but it must in all cases be employed, as the Act directs, in the business of the fishery. Thereafter, a fisherman’s right to possess his fishing room entitled him, as an English subject and landowner, to retain, rent, sell, inherit or bequeath it as he saw fit.<sup>19</sup>

Sedentary fishermen at Newfoundland established fishing rooms wherever such operations could be conducted profitably, and many may have considered these

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<sup>16</sup> Head 1976: 146

<sup>17</sup> McEwen 1978: 21

<sup>18</sup> McEwen 1978: 84; See also Buchanan 1786: 8, notes; McEwen 1978: 136

<sup>19</sup> Bannister 2003: 123-124

properties to be held under English law. The adoption of a familiar legal framework for Newfoundland property enabled fishing room operators to organize themselves and their commercial enterprises with increased confidence (Image 5.2).

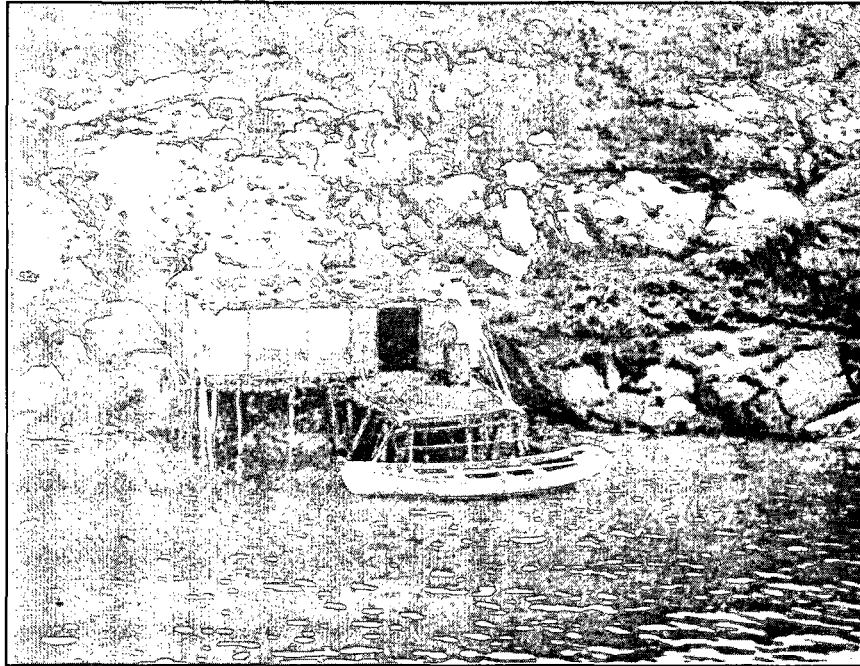


Image 5.2: Newfoundland Fishing Room, 1938<sup>20</sup>

After the Newfoundland Act (1699), planters, bye-boat keepers and shore labourers were permitted to establish fishing rooms on shoreline that had not previously been claimed by English migratory fishermen. It is important to realize, however, that not all Newfoundland inhabitants were necessarily aware of the Newfoundland Act's implementation in 1699, nor of how these regulations would affect their fishery operations. And only a few experienced sedentary fishermen had sufficient capital at their disposal to secure formal property title for their fishing rooms.

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<sup>20</sup> Photograph va7-94, Stanley and Betty Brooks, 1938, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador-CMCS

Images 5.2 to 5.4, perhaps, offer some examples of how fishing rooms may have been distributed along the English Shore. It is possible that the concentration of fishing rooms and settlement in Newfoundland harbours was a reflection of inshore fishery yield and local topography. English migratory fishermen dominated harbours that were in close proximity to fishing grounds that could support intensive harvesting pressure (see Image 5.3). In established core harbours on the English Shore, competition for fishing rooms among migratory fishermen underpinned coastal land use development.

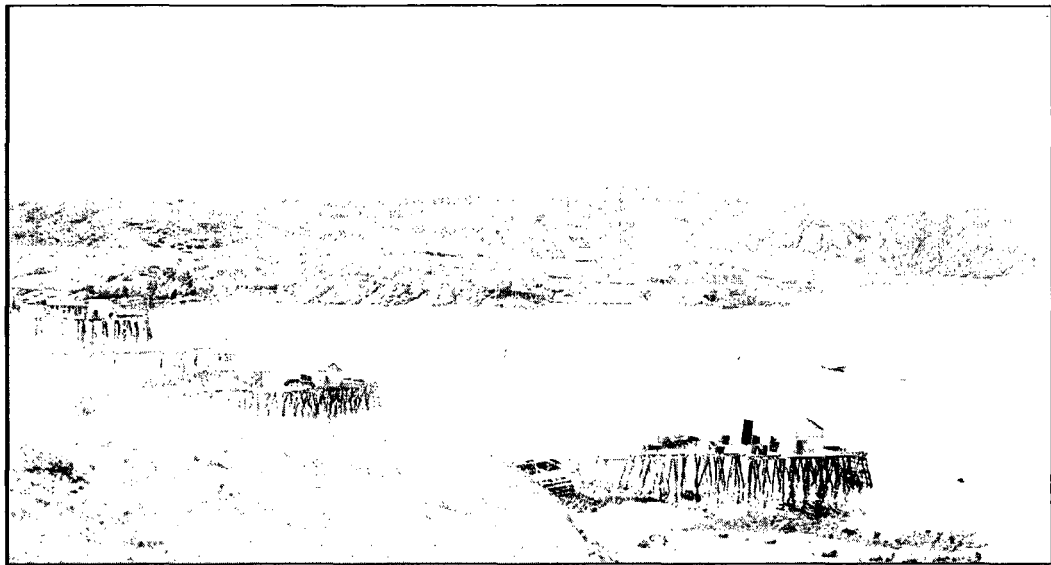


Image 5.3: Newfoundland Fishing Harbour<sup>21</sup>

In the largest harbours most planters occupied to themselves small coves or islands, and still others had taken up residence in fishing stations outside the main ship harbours . . .<sup>22</sup>.

Outside areas dominated by migratory fishermen, Newfoundland inhabitants situated their fishing rooms wherever inshore cod fishery returns allowed them to support themselves and their dependents.

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<sup>21</sup> Photograph e32-19, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador

<sup>22</sup> Handcock 1989: 45



Image 5.4: Newfoundland Fishing Harbour<sup>23</sup>

#### 5.4: FISHING ROOMS HELD AS REAL PROPERTY

Some ignorant people have questioned whether private Fishing-rooms ought to be considered as Real and Personal property. . . Lands with Dwelling-houses and other buildings erected on them are of the Nature of Real property. As there are no Attorneys or professed Practitioners of the Law at Newfoundland . . . the Solemnities or Forms, usually observed in England in the Conveyance of Real property, are not completely observed . . . the Opinions of Lawyers and the Decisions of Courts in England have proceeded upon that Belief, that Private Fishing-rooms are subject to the same Rules of Law which take place in cases of Real property in England<sup>24</sup>.

Fishing rooms achieved *real property* status under an interpretation of English law which melded statute law, common law, and customary land usage to suit Newfoundland realities. Statute law was a reflection of imperial policy where “Newfoundland constituted merely a fishing station where property was devoted to the prosecution of the English migratory fishery”<sup>25</sup>. Customs needed to reflect “clearly established and

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<sup>23</sup> Photograph e31-4, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador

<sup>24</sup> Buchanan 1786: 8, notes

<sup>25</sup> Bannister 2003: 123-124

obligatory” behaviour that did not “contradict the prerogative of the Crown”<sup>26</sup>. However, the stipulation that real property had to be held in conjunction with the fishery- and must not interfere with migratory fishing operations- was neither completely nor consistently upheld”<sup>27</sup>.

As real property, an English Shore inhabitant’s fishing room, along with its buildings, goods and equipment, also became recognized as fixed assets. Property ownership remained conditional on continuous occupancy. This was difficult to maintain. Newfoundland fishermen faced many challenges against which they had little protection: salt fish market downturns, early harassment by foreign fishermen, supply shipping interruptions, credit shortages, etc., and their own health and labour. Fishing rooms were considered to be fixed assets, and thus could be forfeited to creditors, such as Lester and Slade, who sometimes collected fishing rooms, salt fish and equipment to settle outstanding debts<sup>28</sup>. Such actions often endangered a planter’s well-being, along with his ability to continue fishing the following year.

After the Newfoundland Act (1699), English sedentary fishermen felt justified in claiming property rights on coastline both inside and outside the traditional English Shore. This was the coastline where the English fished, which up to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was mainly between Cape Bonavista and Cape Race near Trepassey (see Figure 5.1). Within this fishery zone, it is very likely that Western Charter and Newfoundland Act regulations were observed. But fishing rooms established outside this traditional

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<sup>26</sup> Bannister 2003: 15, 57, 97

<sup>27</sup> Bannister 2003: 123-124

<sup>28</sup> Anspach 1819: 151-152

English fishery zone sometimes brought these migratory and sedentary fishermen into contact with French migratory fishermen. The French had enjoyed *preferred* shore fishery rights outside the English Shore since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and conducted inshore fisheries both north of Cape Bonavista, and west of Trepassey (see Figure 5.1). Census data collected by Commodore John Berry in 1675 revealed that a number of English fishermen, by this time, conducted shore operations at Bonavista.



Image 5.5: Quidi Vidi Harbour Near St. Johns<sup>29</sup>

Image 5.5 reflects an ideal, self-contained inshore fishery unit, but this site lacks the land necessary for constructing drying flakes, or to provide space on the fishing room for the creation of a kitchen garden. However, the growing network of Newfoundland fishing rooms did support England's territorial claim to inhabit English Shore harbours.

Although scattered thinly over the entire breadth of the English Shore, the winter settlers at least symbolized English sovereignty, especially after 1662 when the French fortified Plaisance [Placentia] and began to encourage settlement in Placentia Bay.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Photograph e13-52, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador

<sup>30</sup> Hancock 1989: 37

## 5.5: 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY ENGLISH AND FRENCH TREATY SHORES

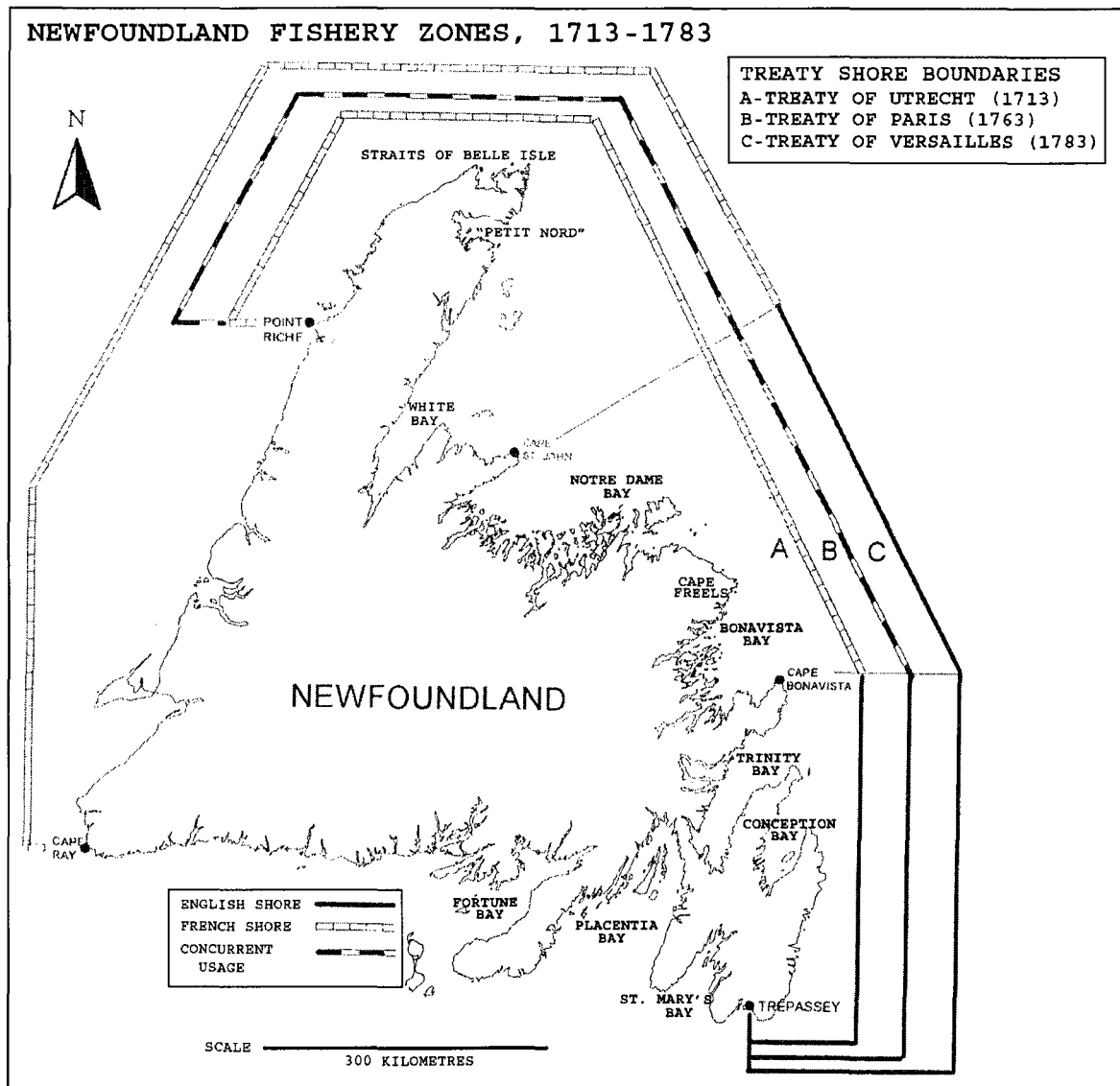


Figure 5.1: Newfoundland Fishery Zones, 1713-1783<sup>31</sup>

From 1689 to 1713 the colonies and fisheries in the north-western Atlantic were caught in more than two decades of almost continuous warfare between France and England. . . In 1697-8 and again in 1705 and 1709 the French devastated the English settlements on the Avalon, but, as they did not establish permanent garrisons, English fishermen returned as the French left.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Note: Figure 5.1 does not include complete fishery zone information for Newfoundland's entire south coast.

<sup>32</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: 49

French naval campaigns were designed to disrupt England's salt fish trade and to discourage settlement outside the English Shore. During these raids, English sedentary fishermen sometimes withdrew to nearby islands which they defended until French ships vacated the area<sup>33</sup>. Anglo-French wars created disruptions in trans-Atlantic shipping, but allowed English migratory and sedentary fishermen to explore resource exploitation opportunities both within and outside the English Shore. English fishermen learned of rich fishing grounds near Cape Freels, Bonavista Bay which convinced a number of independent operators to speculate on more long-distance ventures. In a letter from William Coch of Bonavista to Colonel Norris written on September 7, 1698, he remarked,

I think it is my duty to acquaint your Honour that to the north side of this bay are many extraordinary harbours and better fishing; one William Wyng [Wynn] has fished there some years . . . and this year one Nowell [Newell] has been that way who has more fish for his two boats than they [English Shore fishermen] have for shallops, so that next summer several of the inhabitants of this harbour design to remove thither and their masters of ships that have fished there this year intend to do likewise, for it is certain the fewer boats are kept in a place the better the fishing.<sup>34</sup>

Anglo-French treaties were implemented to restore an atmosphere which would promote profitable commercial activity for all concerned. Between 1696 and 1713:

. . . the coastal expansion of the English fishery into northern and southern regions previously occupied by the French; the growth of settlement in both old areas [the English Shore] and new areas of activity; the gradual development of a more diverse economy including winter activities; further innovations in the cod fishery, especially offshore banking; and the shift in emphasis from a migratory to a settler fishery.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Handcock 1989: 45

<sup>34</sup> Head 1964: 10

<sup>35</sup> Handcock 1989: 73



The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) (see Figure 5.1) granted Newfoundland entirely to England, and removed French fishermen to the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon in Fortune Bay<sup>36</sup>. Under the treaty, Bonavista Bay became part of a shore on which both English and French were permitted to catch and process cod, but under English supervision. Productive cod fisheries were concentrated primarily near the peninsular headlands, Cape Bonavista and Cape Freels. In some respects, Bonavista Bay represented a kind of no man's land between the English who fished principally at Bonavista, and the French who maintained inshore fisheries and fishing rooms around Cape Freels. It is important, however, to differentiate between the actions of French migratory fishermen who peacefully engaged in shore fishery activity, and naval commanders who conducted military campaigns against England to preserve shore fishery rights. In the same way, as Anglo-French hostilities continued at Newfoundland, many English fishermen rebuilt their fishing rooms and resumed fishing duties.

With the commencement of the Seven Years War in 1756, and the Treaty of Utrecht in abeyance, English fishermen established fishing rooms on the northern frontier. But in 1762, a squadron of five warships commanded by Louis d'Arsac de Ternay attacked English Shore settlement and fishery infrastructure as far north as Trinity, Trinity Bay<sup>37</sup>. But rather than dealing a decisive blow to English fisheries at Newfoundland, it merely forced fishing room owners and their dependents to rebuild their shore operations, and begin again.

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<sup>36</sup> Anspach 1819: 171-172

<sup>37</sup> O'Flaherty 1999: 80-84

The Treaty of Paris (1763) allowed for concurrent English and French shore fishery rights between Cape Bonavista and Point Riche<sup>38</sup>. However, the French were neither permitted to settle the area, nor could they legally retain Newfoundland fishing rooms after the fishing season ended each year<sup>39</sup>. English fishermen believed they had gained an *exclusive* right to fish cod while the French believed these rights to be *concurrent*.

In 1764, the English government appointed Hugh Palliser naval governor of Newfoundland, and ordered him to restore order within the English and French fishery zones<sup>40</sup>. The English government instructed Palliser not to allow English subjects to interrupt the French fishery, but the French were to be confined within their fishery zone. The orders stipulated that all fishery disputes were to be settled by English officials, and French warships were to be kept out of Newfoundland waters. In 1765, Palliser travelled north of Cape Bonavista to confirm that treaty regulations were properly observed by both English and French fishermen. He ensured that the French did not erect or maintain buildings that were not directly employed in the fishery, and that no French fishermen remained at Newfoundland during winter months. Palliser patrolled the Newfoundland coastline in summer, but in winter English sedentary fishermen often destroyed buildings and equipment that the French had erected.

Palliser hoped to restore the English migratory fishery at Newfoundland believing that a strong trans-Atlantic fishery would provide a training ground for seamen fit for English navy service. Part of the problem concerned the practice of English ship captains who encouraging crewmen to remain at Newfoundland after the fishery period ended.

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<sup>38</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: Plate 42

<sup>39</sup> Prowse (1895) 2002: 354

<sup>40</sup> Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. IV: 597-601

In 1766, Palliser hoped to limit sedentary fishermen's property rights by trying to convert unoccupied land, or land without clear title, into ship fishing rooms. Buildings that were erected illegally were to be cleared away to accommodate migratory fisheries. In 1767, Palliser issued a proclamation that was designed to rid English Shore harbours of thousands of migratory fishermen who had been coaxed into remaining by ship captains. Palliser viewed Newfoundland's growing sedentary population as being,

. . . no better than the property or Slaves of the Merchant Suppliers [sic] to whom by Exhorbitant [sic] high Prices on their Goods they are largely in Debt, more than they can work out during life.<sup>41</sup>

From 1764 to 1768, Palliser reduced Newfoundland's sedentary population from 10,000 to 7,000, and increased the migratory fishery from 7,000 (283 ships) to more than 12,000 (389 ships)<sup>42</sup>. Head explained that in Bonavista Bay during the last half of the 1760's, the fishery,

. . . was still largely in the hands of the migratory fishing ships. The inhabitants kept about fifty boats, but the [English migratory] ships usually kept about twice that number.<sup>43</sup>

At this time, the English migratory fishery maintained a sizable interest in Bonavista Bay fisheries. The English government issued *Palliser's Act* in 1775, a document that was similar to his proclamation of 1767, to provide a legal framework by which fishery and property policies were to be implemented and maintained<sup>44</sup>.

Palliser initiated an active role in patrolling the Newfoundland and Labrador coast, and effectively defended England's sovereignty and commercial interests against foreign

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<sup>41</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: 50

<sup>42</sup> Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. IV: 597-601

<sup>43</sup> Head 1976: 174

<sup>44</sup> Prowse (1895) 2002: 318-322; See also O'Flaherty 1999: 86-92

fishermen. However, the northern frontier was not adequately supervised by English naval authorities, so English fishing room establishment proceeded in a largely unrestricted fashion. As well as proposing that any unoccupied fishing rooms founded between Cape Bonavista and Point Riche should revert back to migratory fishery usage, Palliser also expected fishing room owners to show valid ownership certificates for their rooms, but no such action was pursued<sup>45</sup>.

The Treaty of Versailles in 1783 shifted the southern limits of the French Shore north to Cape St. John<sup>46</sup>. French fishermen were encouraged to relocate their shore operations to the north and western coasts of Newfoundland as far south as Cape Ray (See Figure 5.1)<sup>47</sup>. By this time, the French fishery in Bonavista Bay had been virtually abandoned<sup>48</sup>. English fishermen used this period of reorganization of fishery zones to increase their contribution to the salt fish trade, and to continue establishing fishing rooms on the northeast coast. Hancock writes:

The 18<sup>th</sup> century in Newfoundland was marked by the imposition of English supremacy over the Newfoundland fishery, and a concomitant territorial expansion over the Newfoundland coast. Until the latter half of the century seasonal migration continued to dominate the population; however, before the end of the century the transition towards a permanently settled [English] community was well advanced.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Hancock 1977: 23; See also Head 1976: 77; O'Flaherty 1999: 88

<sup>46</sup> Anspach 1819: 210

<sup>47</sup> Hancock 1977: 23; See also O'Flaherty 1999: 102-103

<sup>48</sup> O'Flaherty 1999: 89

<sup>49</sup> Hancock 1977: 18

## 5.6: BONAVISTA BAY'S INDIGENOUS POPULATION

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a number of English bye-boat keepers, planters, their families and servants expanded their operations to encompass harbours north of Cape Bonavista. But such ventures had to be undertaken cautiously given the delicacy of Anglo-French relations. But the absence of French activity in Bonavista Bay during the 18<sup>th</sup> century may have constituted an open invitation to English fishermen to encroach in the area. English fishermen harvested a variety of Bonavista Bay resources to supplement shore fishery revenue. They soon developed routines attuned to commercial resource abundance and seasonality in a similar way to that of the Beothuk<sup>50</sup>. English fishermen learned to augment fishery revenue by harvesting wood, fishing salmon<sup>51</sup>, trapping fur, and hunting seals in the area<sup>52</sup>. Seal herds travelling along the east coast of Newfoundland during the late winter whelping period were carried alongside Bonavista Bay headlands, and offered sedentary fishermen a vital fresh meat supply<sup>53</sup>. Difficulties arose when English fishermen and the Beothuks competed for access to the same resources. Marshall explained this seasonal resource conflict thus:

Since the French fishing crews went back to France for winter, there would be no conflict with them over inland resources; in fact French records rarely mention the Beothuk. However, a great number of English settlers from Fogo, Twillingate, and Bonavista took over French fishing places for the winter to trap fur bearers and catch seal. Many of them also hunted and trapped inland and thus competed with the Beothuk for fur-bearing animals.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Pope 2004: 248

<sup>51</sup> Head 1976: 175

<sup>52</sup> Head 1976: 77; See also Marshall 1996: 69-78; Handcock 1989: 76

<sup>53</sup> Sanger 1977: 136, 141

<sup>54</sup> Marshall 1996: 62

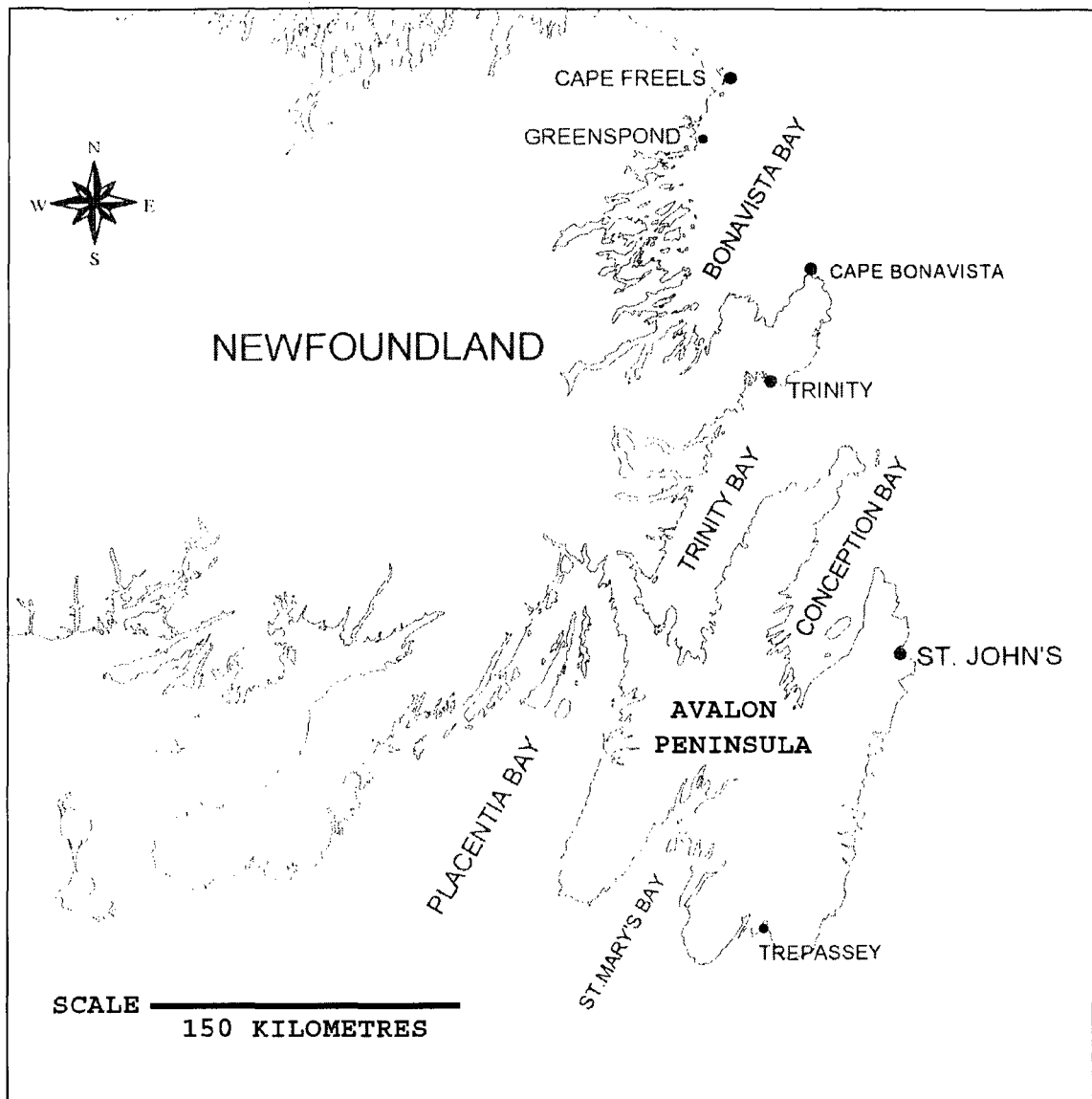
English fishery and resource exploitation activities threatened an aboriginal lifestyle that had developed over centuries<sup>55</sup>. Further, the English needed to install a permanent presence in Bonavista Bay to protect their fishing rooms, shore infrastructure, and stored supplies against Beothuk plunderers. And the most cost-effective and reliable method to protect frontier property was through settlement.

### **5.7: 17<sup>th</sup> AND 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY NEWFOUNDLAND POPULATION INCREASES BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE ENGLISH SHORE**

The expansion of English sedentary fisheries at Newfoundland during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and in its wake settlement northwards, represented processes that were either directly sponsored by, or at least supported by, mercantile firms. These merchant adventurers and ship owners converted prime Newfoundland fishing rooms into their own trading premises. From the 1760's, Bonavista Bay's main fishing harbours, Bonavista and Greenspond, were used and supplied by Poole merchant firms that were headquartered in Trinity (see Map 5.1). Some merchants sometimes spent time in Newfoundland while others remained in England where they hired agents and employees to manage their interests from Newfoundland harbours. Some employees were contracted by merchants for a single fishing season while others signed up for a number of years. While merchants sometimes employed migratory fishermen, they became increasingly reliant upon sedentary fishermen to catch and dry-process cod and other trade staples such as cod and seal oil and pelts.

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<sup>55</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: Plate 20; See also Marshall 1996: 95; O'Flaherty 1999: 73



Map 5.1: Newfoundland's Eastern Shoreline

Generally, the growth of a permanent population in Newfoundland can be attributed to a mercantilist system of migration. Seasonal migration, a surrogate factor of mercantilist exploitation, contributed progressively to emigration and colonization through the establishment of year-round economic activities.<sup>56</sup>

In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, Newfoundland-based merchants had been eager to expand their operations onto the Bonavista Bay frontier where:

<sup>56</sup> Hancock 1977: 24

. . . such [fishing rooms] sites began to attract the attention of merchants and traders as locations to build warehouses, stores, and other fixed capital buildings. In their respective districts . . . functioned like Harbour Grace and Carbonear in Conception Bay, that is, as the earliest and chief settlements around which dependent settlements sited in smaller coves and shelters developed.<sup>57</sup>

Firms based in Newfoundland harbours rather than in England offered the most reliable method for conducting shore fishery operations, and providing supply and trade services for the sedentary population<sup>58</sup>. As English merchants realized the benefit of conducting business directly from Newfoundland, they began to accumulate fishing rooms for themselves<sup>59</sup>.

Trinity firms conducted *ship fisheries* in Bonavista Bay that were, for all intents and purposes, migratory fisheries directed locally<sup>60</sup>. For example, the Lesters' of Poole had developed strong business and familial connections to Trinity, Newfoundland:

Between 1713 and 1760 merchants from Poole, England, developed Trinity as the focus of their trade in northeastern Newfoundland. They built warehouses, stores, and wharves, most of them on a small peninsula in the centre of Trinity harbour. By the end of the century the largest of these establishments resembled the Lester property shown below [Image 5.6]. Such firms employed agents, clerks, bookkeepers, tradesmen, seamen, and fishermen; dealt with resident boat masters [planters] in sundry smaller settlements; and established an intricate network of trade, dependence, and debt along the coast of northeastern Newfoundland.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Hancock 1989: 117 , 32

<sup>58</sup> Hancock 1989: 232

<sup>59</sup> Hancock 1989: 226; See also Matthews 1975: 199

<sup>60</sup> Hancock 1989: 222

<sup>61</sup> Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: Plate 26



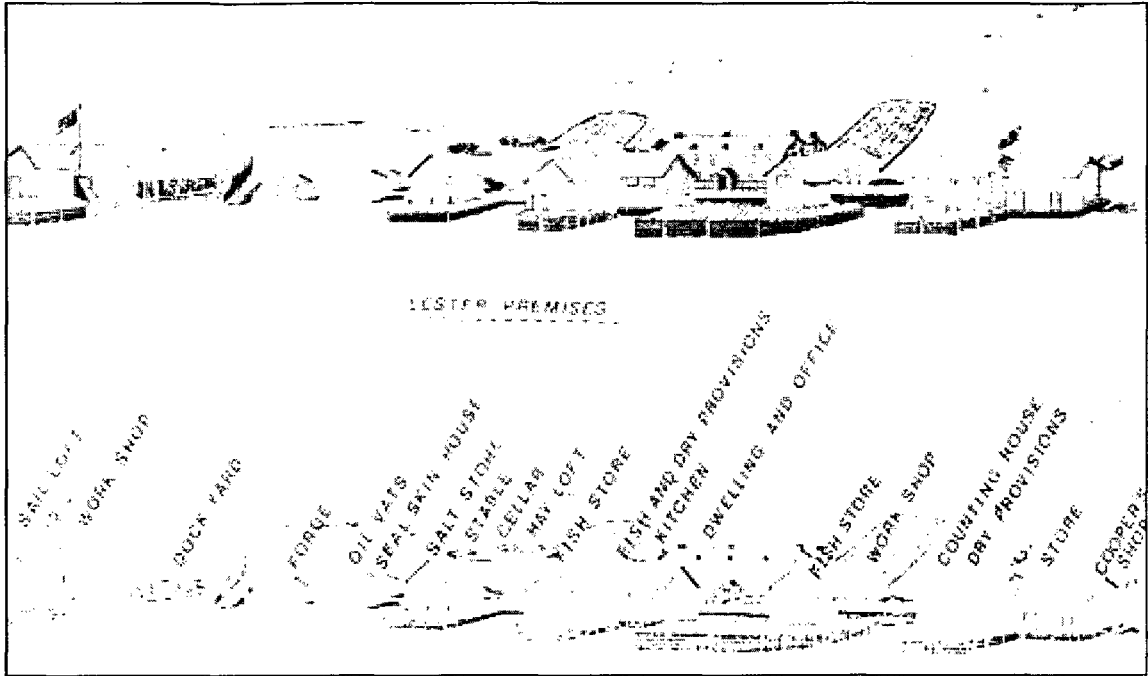


Image 5.6: Lester and Company Premises, Trinity Bay in the 1770s<sup>62</sup>

Ship fisheries introduced large-scale harvesting and processing activity, and occupied shore space several times larger than that occupied by a fishing room (see Image 5.6).

Merchants installed employees upon fishing rooms wherever shore fisheries could be conducted profitably<sup>63</sup>. Merchant premises required agents and employees to construct buildings, complete routine maintenance, repair boats, collect bait, and to oversee preparations for the following year<sup>64</sup>. Employees remaining at Newfoundland during winter maintained business affiliations with local fishermen, and provided security for stored supplies and equipment<sup>65</sup>. In summer, agents personally supervised the fishing

<sup>62</sup> Hancock: 1983

<sup>63</sup> O'Flaherty 1999: 74-75

<sup>64</sup> Head 1971: 90-91

<sup>65</sup> Hancock 1989: 236

industry, and expedited salt fish cargos to market using the firm's own ships<sup>66</sup>. Merchant properties accommodated a variety of shore infrastructure, and were often sufficiently spacious to provide processing space for ship fishery landings<sup>67</sup>.

The mercantile posts became major centres for sustained contact with primary-producing settlements of fishermen-planters, the loci for trans-shipment of goods and supplies and for the inward and outward movement of migrants, and the locations that attracted the settlement of tradesmen, missionaries, and in some cases, government officials.<sup>68</sup>

Merchants operating locally maintained a foothold in the Newfoundland fishery, and their presence was vital to ensure that fishery activity, supply and credit were conducted in an efficient and profitable manner.

In the eighteenth century, Poole merchants not only led the way in establishing a growing supply trade with settlers but also took the lead in building a series of trading establishments, acquiring landed property, and promoting regular trade with planters. . . By 1762, the larger Poole establishments were valued at over £60,000, and some of them were then merely in the stage of early expansion.<sup>69</sup>

Merchant firms had become major property holders, and their main premises were often substantially larger than fishing rooms occupied by English planters and bye-boat keepers (Image 5.6). Merchants were prepared to supply the sedentary population from their own network of properties<sup>70</sup>. Possession of their own fishing rooms enabled merchants to gather valuable fishery information, and to deploy their manpower and ships effectively each year.

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<sup>66</sup> Hancock 1977: 32

<sup>67</sup> Hancock 1989: 224- 225

<sup>68</sup> Hancock 1989: 278

<sup>69</sup> Hancock 1989: 220, 226-227; See also Reeves 1967: 146-149

<sup>70</sup> "In 1787 Benjamin Lester owned eight bankers employing eighty-seven men, but the firm's total Newfoundland fleet numbered about twenty ships." Hancock 1989: 190

In the period 1785-89, the Lester House owned eighteen to twenty vessels, was shipping out upwards of 60,000 quintals of fish annually (8-10 percent of the total Newfoundland production) and was supplying 2500-2700 inhabitants. Lester's chief competitors in Trinity, Jeffrey and Street, were reported to 'ship near 50,000 quintals and have in proportion the same number of people dependent upon them'.<sup>71</sup>

By late 18<sup>th</sup> century, ship fisheries organized by Trinity firms had begun to employ rather aggressive tactics against French competitors in an effort to exclude them from the Bonavista Bay harbours. In 1770, a French ship captain named Hamon wrote,

. . . Mr. Duchesne [an officer of Mr. Delarue] confirmed that 15 boats from his ship were headed for my area to be hauled up in our harbour [Greenspond]. The same officer confirmed to me that the English . . . had gathered in large numbers from the small harbours in the area and, armed with rifles, poles, sticks, etc., on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup>, when rifle shots were fired as a signal, they boarded the boats of Captain Delarue, who at the time was on board one of those where they threw the cod overboard and even threatened to ill-treat the crew if they dared resist.<sup>72</sup>

English firms also used English law and their considerable local influence to gain control over shore space, bait catching areas and fishing grounds in effort to displace or disrupt French operations. In particular, English fishermen prevented the French from occupying certain Bonavista Bay shore positions, impeded bait-gathering procedures, and even challenged French fishermen who worked on Sundays<sup>73</sup>. Confrontations were common, and hardly surprising considering the legacy of conflict between these groups<sup>74</sup>.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century was a period of growth for the Newfoundland's sedentary population, and they somehow managed to keep fishing and to establish control over their fishing rooms despite myriad challenges. A 'field study' of settlement expansion into the

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<sup>71</sup> Handcock 1989: 222, 117, 32; See also Handcock 1977: 18

<sup>72</sup> Hamon 1770: Entry for August 23

<sup>73</sup> Hamon 1770: Nota bene for June 13; See also June 22; July 31

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., Entry for July 1

northern frontier can be examined using the *Registry of Fishing Rooms for Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806*<sup>75</sup>. This registry can be used to explore the changing nature of fishing room ownership outside the traditional English Shore.

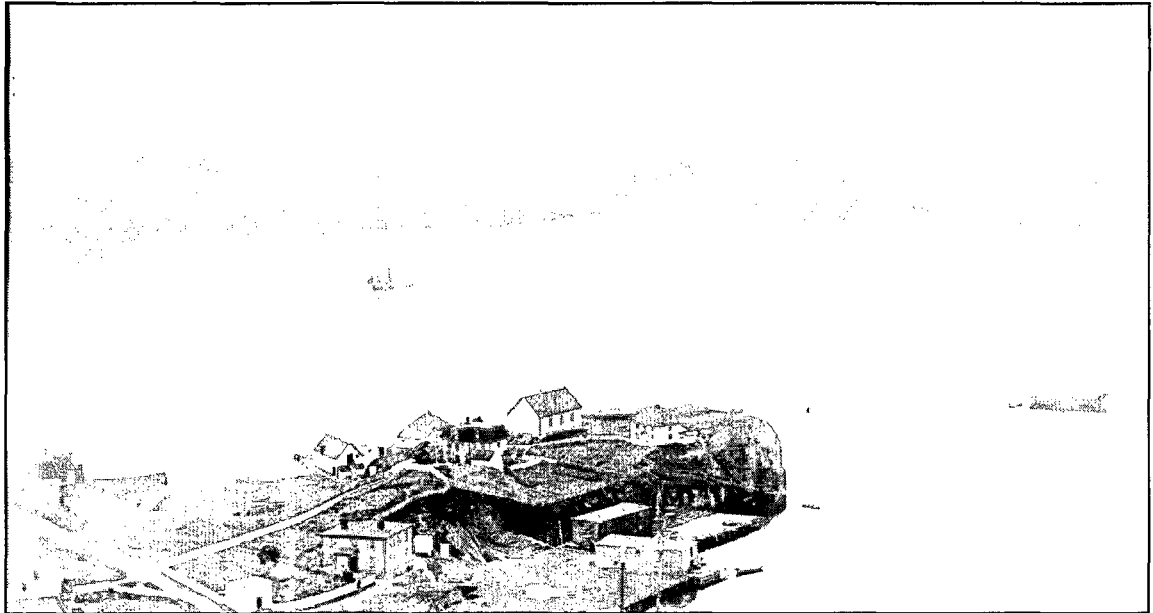


Image 5.7: Newfoundland Fishing Harbour (ca. 1930)<sup>76</sup>

Image 5.7 depicts a somewhat physically-restricted inshore fishery site incorporating an intricately adjusted land use pattern containing at least three of four fishing rooms. Note how the land use requirements for several inshore fishery operations have been transposed so beautifully, and organically, onto such a rugged coastal landscape.

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<sup>75</sup> "Register of Fishing Rooms for Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806", Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador

<sup>76</sup> Photograph e40-15, Unknown Author, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador

## **6.0: BONAVIDA BAY FISHING ROOMS**

### **6.1: INTRODUCTION**

The erosion and abandonment of the migratory systems in the Newfoundland cod fishery, and their replacement by resident fisheries supported initially by English-based merchant firms represent fundamental processes in settlement development. The absence of supervision, inspection and the enforcement of fishing room regulations, or indeed of any proper law enforcement agencies at Newfoundland, are factors that made this situation possible.

We have seen that during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Bonavista Bay emerged as a new frontier for the English that was substantially unaffected in its land and resource accessibility by practices prevalent in English Shore harbours. But its delayed development by English fishermen brings its experience closer to our century, and more to the point, into the period of historical record. In short, early 19<sup>th</sup> century occupancy documents for Bonavista Bay enable us to observe the legal process and spatial pattern of fishing room development in the coastal landscape.

### **6.2: 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY POPULATION EXPANSION INTO BONAVIDA BAY**

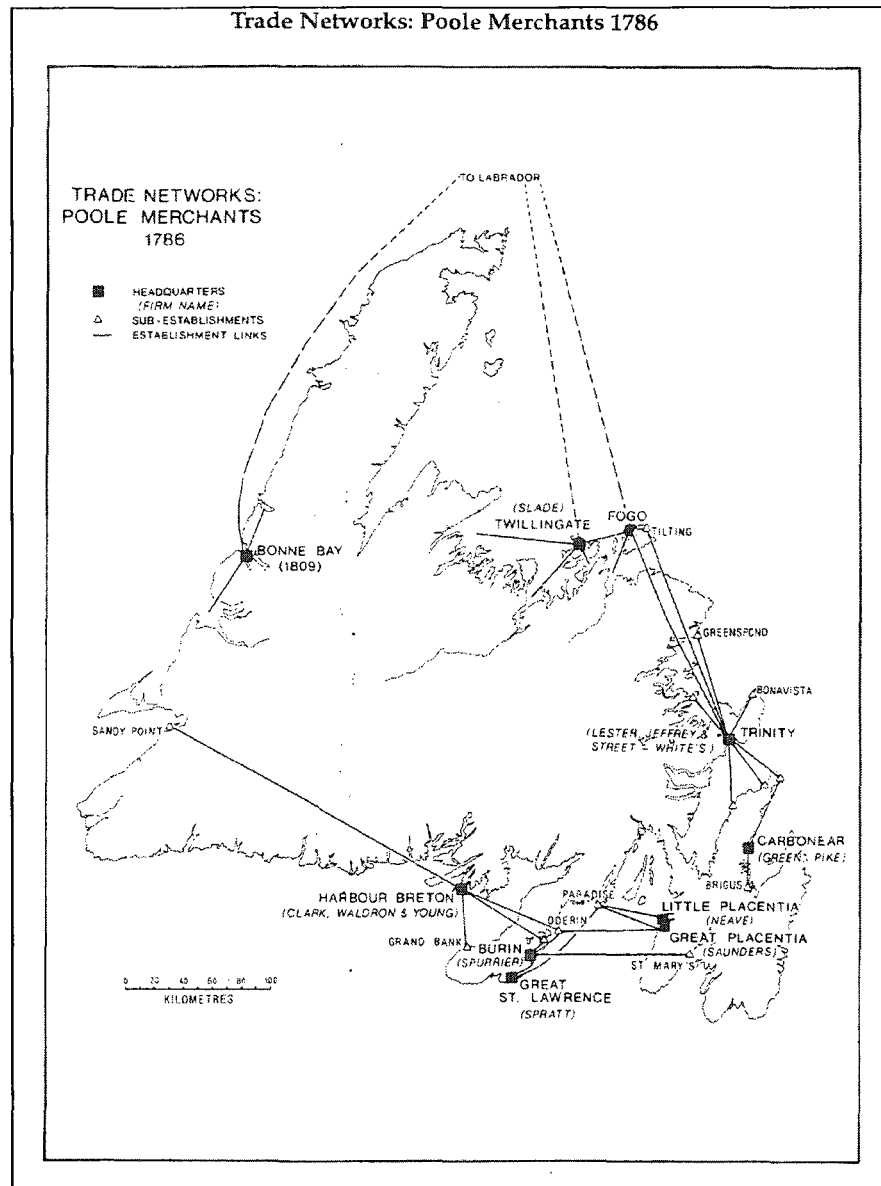
. . . by the 1780s, Poole merchants had command over most of the northern and southern regions of the island. They were expanding into the remaining frontiers, northward and westward. In these districts, settler populations were in an early phase of growth, and it seems that one of the chief reasons was the increasing inclination of merchants to adopt a strategy of becoming regular suppliers and marketing agents.<sup>1</sup>

The expansion of the English fishery into Bonavista Bay, and in its wake, the march of settlement northwards were processes that were either directly sponsored or, once

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<sup>1</sup> Handcock 1977: 225

undertaken by ordinary English fishermen, were supported by mercantile firms and traders (adventurers and ship owners) who among other things were largely responsible for converting prime fishing rooms into trading premises. This was a phenomenon of the 1760s when a number of fishing rooms were supplied by English firms that were often headquartered in Trinity (see Map 6.1).



Map 6.1: Trade Networks: Poole Merchants 1786<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Handcock 1989: 221

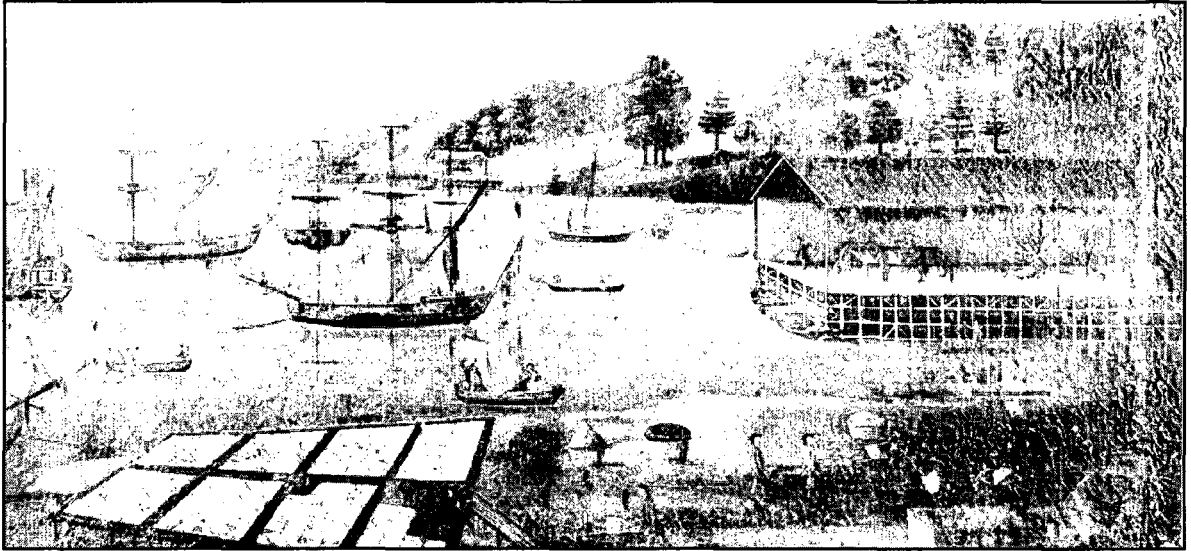


Image 6.1: Lester & Co. Premises, Trinity, Trinity Bay (ca. 1770)<sup>3</sup>

English firms sought coastal space in Newfoundland fishery harbours in an effort to organize their business ventures, and to accommodate their complex capital assets. Of particular interest were areas that had already proven their commercial value as ship fishery bases that had become available to local claimants. Images 5.6 and 6.1 depict properties that were originally claimed by Vice-Admirals in Trinity during the 1670's. By the early 1700's, it was settled by Captain William Taverner for a few years until its ownership was undertaken by his brother Jacob who was a resident planter. In 1748, the fishing room was assumed by Isaac (and later) by Benjamin Lester, both former residents of Poole, England. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Lesters' expanded their fishery enterprise by establishing winter bases on the Bonavista Bay frontier. They explored new commercial fishery and harvesting opportunities which included furring, sealing, and salmon fisheries<sup>4</sup>. By 1800, the Lesters' were arguably the largest of the local merchant

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<sup>3</sup> Photograph c1-135, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador-CMCS

<sup>4</sup> Macpherson 1977: 108

firms in Bonavista Bay. They competed for market share against other Trinity merchant firms such as Thomas Street, Sleat and Read, Samuel White, Samuel Rolles, and Jeffrey and Street<sup>5</sup>.

Other English firms established headquarters outside the English Shore in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. John Slade concentrated his mercantile activities primarily at his headquarters in Fogo and Twillingate, Notre Dame Bay (See Map 6.1). Slade's firm recruited skilled fishermen and entrepreneurs from England to operate a variety of commercial interests spanning from Newfoundland's northeast coast to Labrador. Independent traders, ship owners, lumbermen, and commercial harvesters who were active north of Bonavista Bay maintained commercial connections with Slade<sup>6</sup>.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, English firms expanded into the Newfoundland frontier. This expansion, however, depended upon the establishment or purchase of viable fishing rooms. Ideally, these properties would be sufficiently spacious to contain the merchant's shore infrastructure, be found a reasonable distance from productive fishing grounds, and allow the salt fish exports and imported goods to be efficiently handled at waterside. Gaining ownership of strategically chosen fishing rooms enabled merchant firms to establish a supply trade with local fish producers<sup>7</sup>.

While the merchants yielded the production of codfish to inhabitants, and gradually phased themselves out of direct production, they continued to control access to resources through a credit system. More importantly, merchants continued to be the main pivots in the migration system, and the hinterlands from which they recruited labour for their Newfoundland planters became catchment basins for the continued flow of emigrants.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hancock 1989: 227, 204, 251

<sup>6</sup> Hancock 1989: 239

<sup>7</sup> Hancock 1989: 220, 226-227, See also Reeves 1967: 146-149

<sup>8</sup> Hancock 1977: 277



Merchants contributed to Newfoundland migration by continuing to recruit English labour, a large portion of which found employment with planter fishermen over winter<sup>9</sup>. Planters often relied upon servants engaged by merchants, some of whom were contracted for a single year while others signed on for a number of years (see Figure 6.1).

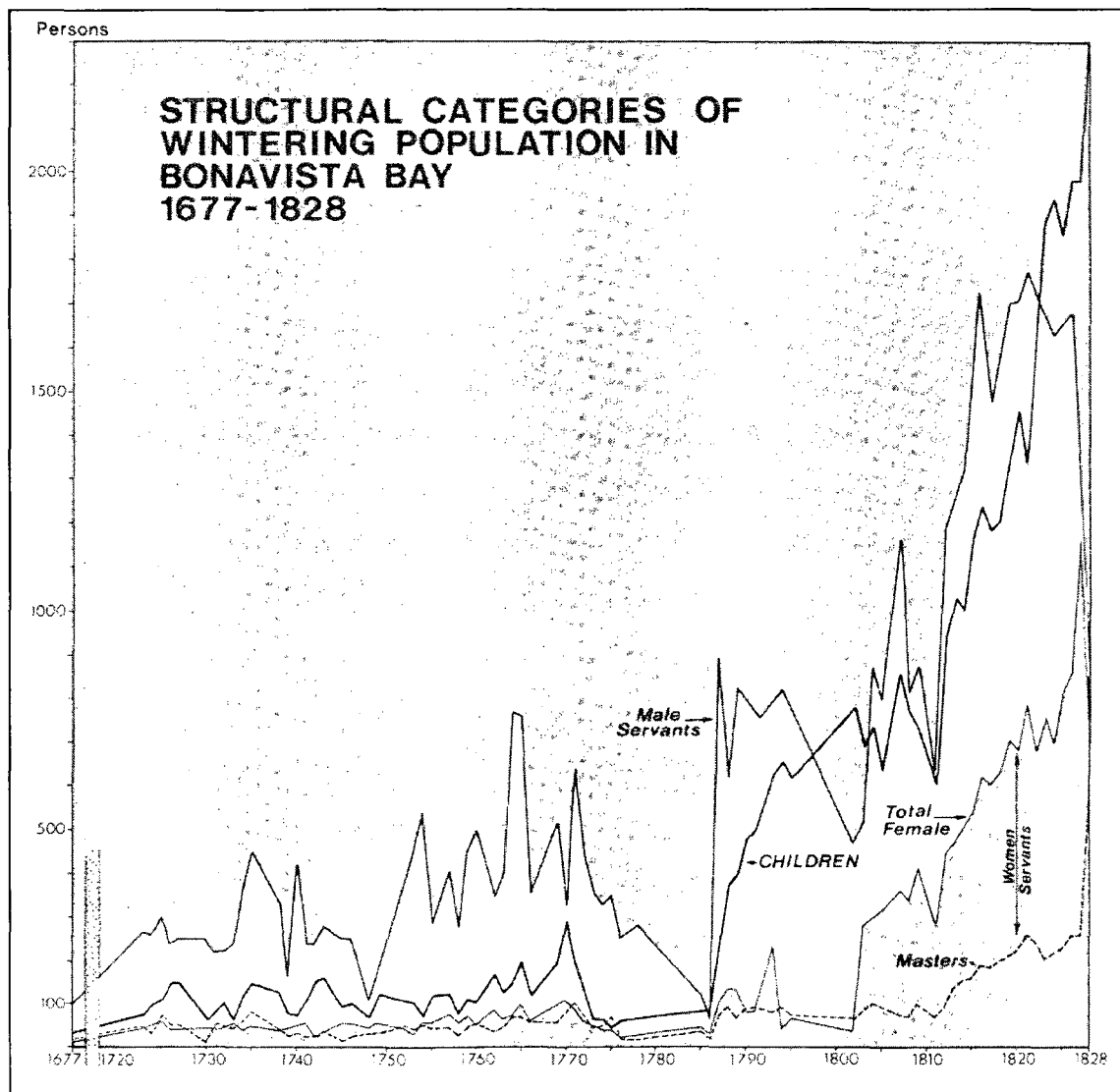


Figure 6.1: Structural Categories of the Wintering Population in Bonavista Bay<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Handcock 1977: 277

<sup>10</sup> Macpherson 1977: 105

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Bonavista Bay's wintering population comprised seasonal migratory fishermen, planters and male servants who inhabited the island on a contractual basis, and planters with capital who served out their contractual obligations but decided to settle at Newfoundland on a permanent basis<sup>11</sup>. Figure 6.1 depicts the structural elements of Bonavista Bay's wintering population. Bonavista Bay's permanent population experienced wide fluctuations due to its largely migratory components, the changing and speculative nature of the inshore cod fishery, and reliance upon the commercial fortunes of merchant firms based in England<sup>12</sup>.

## **6.2: THE REGISTER OF FISHING ROOMS FOR BONAVISTA BAY, 1805-1806**

In 1794, the English government passed an Act to administer justice through the installation of district magistrates who reported to the Governor of Newfoundland<sup>13</sup>. During the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, governors began receiving complaints concerning property issues. Acting on direction from the Colonial Office in London, Governor Erasmus Gower ordered magistrates to conduct detailed surveys of fishing room properties in their districts. By century's end, complaints concerning property issues, especially those among resident planters, were becoming more numerous.

Governor Gower instructed his magistrates to record by what right (under the Newfoundland Act of 1699 and English Common Law) fishing room claimants or occupants possessed or owned their fishing rooms. By 1806, local magistrates had completed their surveys of property information in their respective Newfoundland

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<sup>11</sup> Bannister 2003: 8; See also Handcock 1977: 74, 118

<sup>12</sup> Macpherson 1977: 104

<sup>13</sup> Stat. 31 Geo. III. cap. xxix; 32 Geo. III. c.xlvi. , and Geo. III. cap. lxxvi. in Prowse (1895) 2002: 359

districts. Governor Gower's registers provided detailed regional references regarding the state of fishing room ownership whereby Governors and law officers could deal more decisively with property issues.

"The Register of Fishing Rooms for Bonavista Bay", compiled in 1805-1806 by Magistrate John Bland, himself a resident planter at Bonavista, included detailed property descriptions for ninety-one fishing rooms situated in twenty-one fishery harbours<sup>14</sup> (see Figure 6.2). The register was the first comprehensive enumeration of fishing properties compiled for Bonavista Bay, and provides some clear evidence of coastal development and settlement in the inshore fishery. Bland's register provides a historical summary of fishing rooms for a period of time against which subsequent changes can be measured<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> "Register of Fishing Rooms for Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806", Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador

<sup>15</sup> Handcock 1989: 110

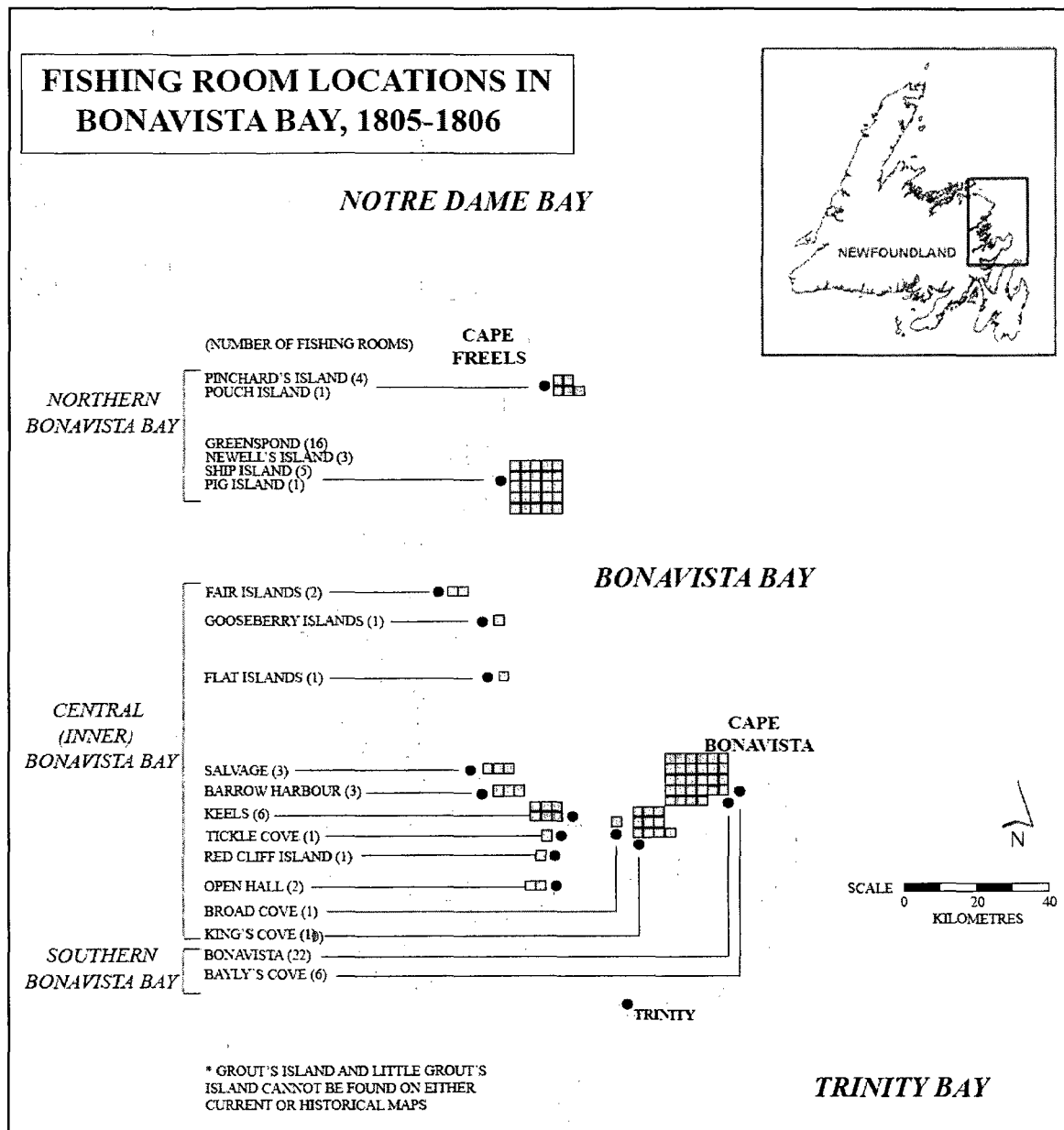


Figure 6.2: Bonavista Bay Fishing Rooms, 1805-1806<sup>16</sup>

Magistrate Bland's register includes a number of fishing stations, not all of which could be considered settlements. Seven places had only a single occupant, and over half had less than five occupants. These could hardly be called communities. They were

<sup>16</sup> Source ArcView 3.2, Created using the Registry of Fishing Rooms for Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806 in the Map Library, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador

summer fishing stations, but some could be considered fledgling communities at a primary stage of development. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the “gradual abandonment” of migratory ship rooms, and their “progressive possession and improvements” by sedentary fishermen, made it exceedingly difficult to differentiate between migratory ship rooms and sedentary fishermen fishing rooms<sup>17</sup>.

Magistrate Bland’s fishing room register includes twenty-one Bonavista Bay fishery harbours (Table 6.1). Bland collected data for each fishing room under ten headings: *Fishing room number; Name by which the room is usually known; Where situated; Name and residence of the claimant; Nature of the claim; Name and residence of the occupant; In what manner held; For what consideration; Date of entry; and Extent of the room, or other erections, and how to ascertain the boundary.* Properties were surveyed systematically from one end of a harbour to the other. Information was collected over two years beginning in northern Bonavista Bay during the autumn of 1805, and continuing southward along the coast towards Cape Bonavista. The report was completed in August, 1806.

REGION BY NUMBER OF FISHING ROOMS FOR BONAVISTA BAY, 1805-1806		
REGION	NUMBER OF FISHING ROOMS	% OF TOTAL FISHING ROOMS
NORTH	32	35
CENTRAL	10	11
SOUTH	49	54
TOTAL	91	100

Table 6.1: Region by Number of Fishing Rooms for Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806

Of the ninety-one fishing rooms described, forty-three of the property owners failed, or were unable, to supply dates of original establishment, eight did not provide the

<sup>17</sup> Hancock 1989: 226

dates of purchase, and twenty-three property descriptions failed to include foreshore boundary measurements. Nevertheless, sufficient data remains to aid our understanding of the processes by which a number of Bonavista Bay's fishing harbours were developed. The table shows that southern Bonavista Bay, comprised of Bonavista Harbour and Bayley's Cove, contained about as many fishing rooms as the rest of the bay combined.

#### **6.2.1: NAME BY WHICH THE FISHING ROOM IS USUALLY KNOWN**

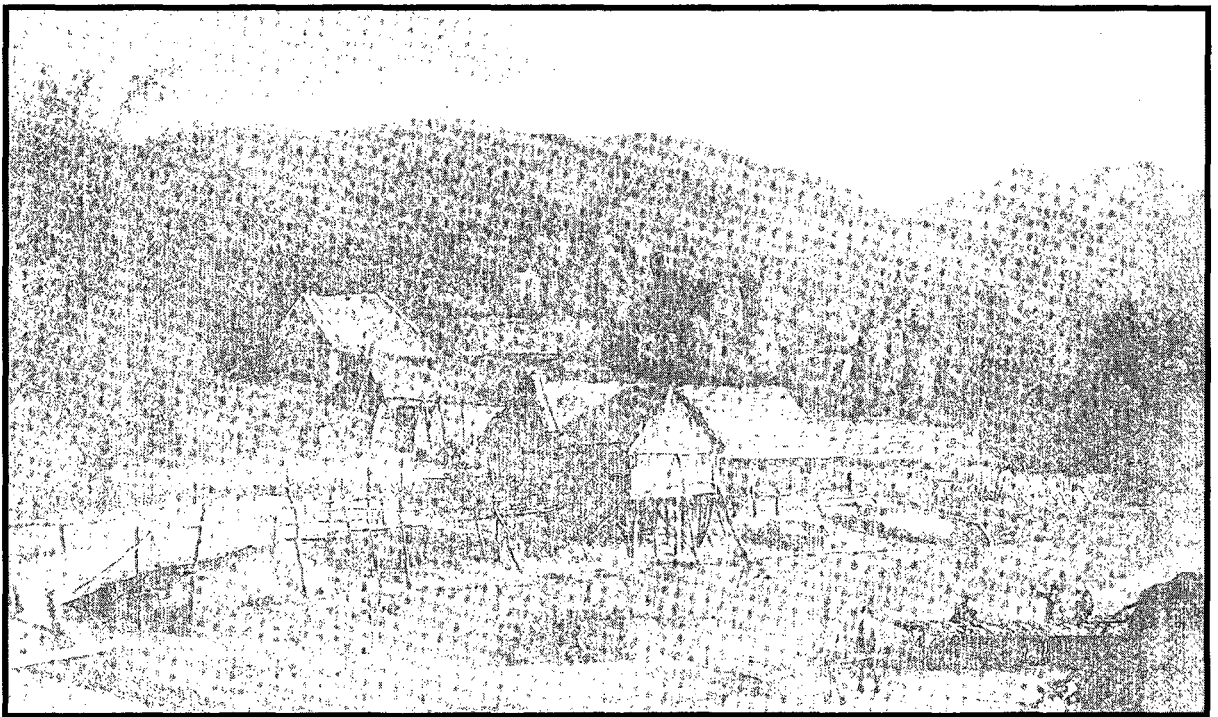


Image 6.2: Typical Newfoundland Fishing Room (ca.1690)<sup>18</sup>

This little Plantation forms one of the charmingest scenes I have yet beheld in Newfoundland. The unfortunate possessor has left behind his House, his Fish Flake, his Store Room, his Garden and his burying ground. The spot is formed of a shelving Rock which serves as a Landing place and a Fish Flake on which he used to dry his Fish; near the Flake is a spot where one of his family has been bury'd which is enclosed with Spruce Sticks and Poles. Above the Flakes and

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<sup>18</sup> By Gerard Edema. Detail, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto in Pope 2004: 326

the Masoleum is a low Rock running several yards which separates the Upper Garden from the Lower Garden. . . The whole is bounded on the land side by Spruce Trees, and next the Sea by some formidable Rocks, except where the Fish Flake and the shelving Landing place intervene. The whole of this arable spot contains about two acres.<sup>19</sup>

Image 6.2 depicts a fishing room that could function as a small, self-contained coastal homestead (or *plantation*). While a number of Bonavista Bay's fishing rooms were operated seasonally by migratory fishermen, many were claimed by independent planter-fishermen who supported families, servants and contracted labourers from fishery revenues. Fishing rooms often contained dwelling houses, buildings and shore infrastructure that were vital to cod harvesting, dry-processing, and storage duties. The image above shows an established fishery operation that had probably been occupied for a number of years. Therefore, it may not represent the majority of recently established fishing rooms encountered by Magistrate Bland. Fishing rooms built around the year 1800 in Pouch Island, Flat Islands or Broad Cove would not likely contain the quality of housing and shore infrastructure depicted above. However, it must be remembered that Bland's data collection techniques were never intended to describe or to quantify the complexity of capital assets for specific fishing rooms.

The use of surnames to identify fishing rooms served a purely functional practice that associated a property with the current or former owner. The register usually identified fishing rooms by the claimant's surname: George Barber's room (1), Lester's Lower room (5), Barry's room (7), etc. Surnames such as Lester, White, Kean, Shambler, and Skiffington associated respective properties with merchants and pioneer adventurers whose activities are known from historical documents.

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas (1794) 1968: 117

### 6.2.2: WHERE [THE FISHING ROOM IS] SITUATED

For ease of examination and analysis, Bonavista Bay has been divided into three regions (see Figure 6.3). The northern portion contained Pinchard's Island, Pouch Island, Greenspond Harbour, Ship Island, Pig Island, Newell's Island, Little Grout's Island, and Grout's Island. Grout's Island and Little Grout's Island do not appear on early 19<sup>th</sup> century or modern maps of the area, but Magistrate Bland included them with the Greenspond data. Central or inner Bonavista Bay encompasses the outer islands and headlands on the west side of Bonavista Bay, but also includes fishing stations found along the bay's south coast. They have been grouped together as they were considered dependencies of either Greenspond or Bonavista<sup>20</sup>. The area contains Fair (Vere) Islands, Gooseberry Islands, Flat Islands, Salvage, and Barrow Harbour, Tickle Cove, Red Cliff Island, Open Hall, Keels, Broad Cove, King's Cove. Fishing harbours and settlements in central Bonavista Bay fell within the economic trading spheres of one or the other, depending upon which side of the bay they were located. Southern Bonavista Bay comprises the communities of Bonavista, and Bayly's Cove. Bonavista supported English fisheries quite early in Newfoundland's history<sup>21</sup>. It was prized both for its proximity to the Cape Bonavista headland, and as a base from which stocks in more northern positions of the bay could be accessed and returned elsewhere for dry-processing<sup>22</sup>.

The physical and marine landscapes of Bonavista Bay can be appreciated through an examination of current maps that include both topographic and bathymetric

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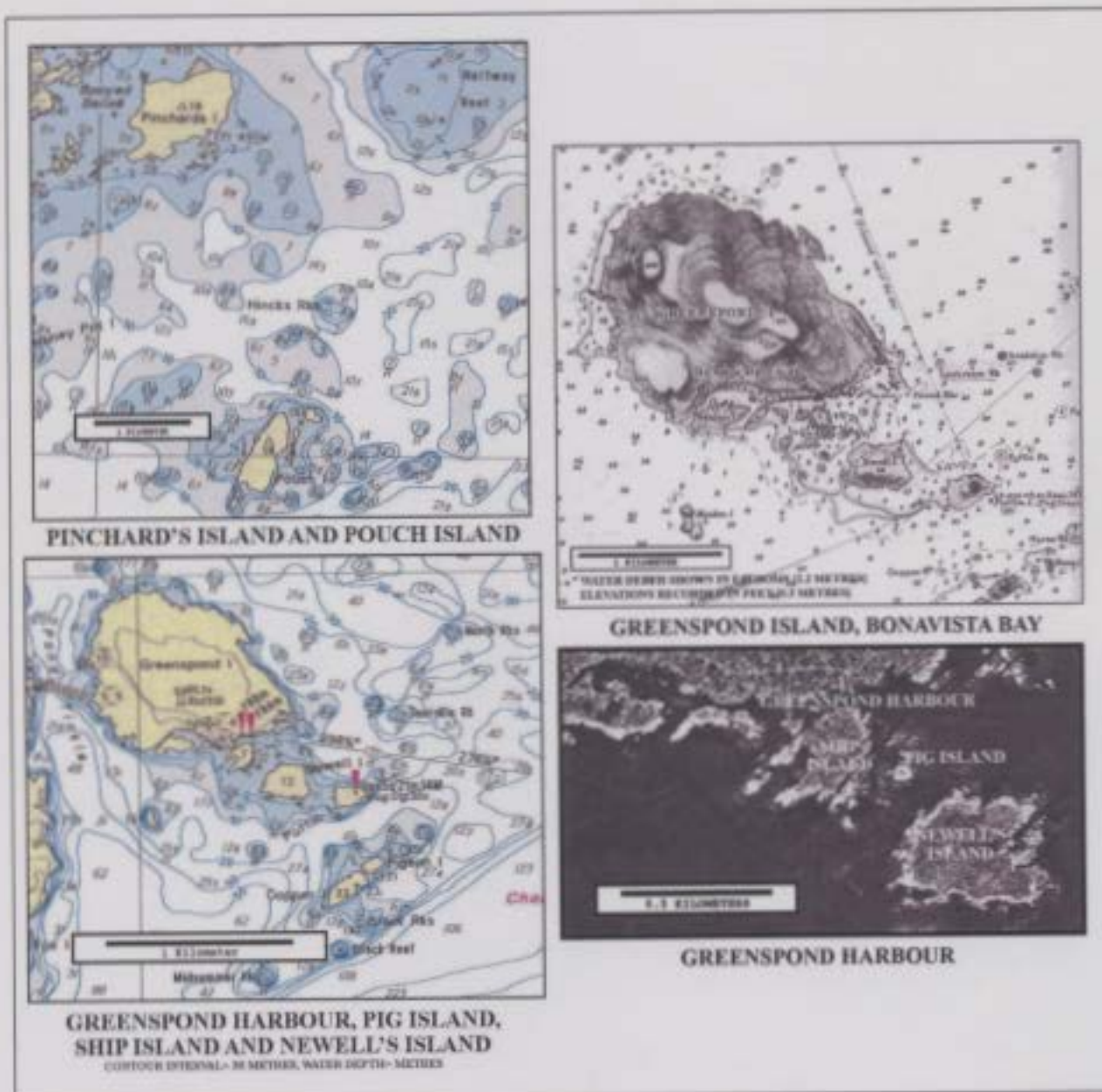
<sup>20</sup> Macpherson 1977: 128

<sup>21</sup> Handcock 1989: 67, 140; Head 1971: 85

<sup>22</sup> Head 1964: 10



information (See Maps 6.2 - 6.4). Bland's register identified Bonavista Bay's places and harbours, but the following maps can prove helpful in the identification of undersea reefs and shoals, and potential inshore cod fishing grounds. It should be borne in mind, however, that hand-lining cod was generally possible only in water depths of less than 30 metres. Complex environmental factors governing the seasonal distributions of inshore cod in these areas each year represented a body of traditional knowledge which was invaluable to the 18<sup>th</sup> century Bonavista Bay fisherman. I have included air-photos for Greenspond and Bonavista to give the reader an appreciation for these harbours' suitability for fishery and shore infrastructure requirements. A historical map of Bonavista allows us to view the organization of fishing rooms near the time of Bland's report (see Map 6.4).

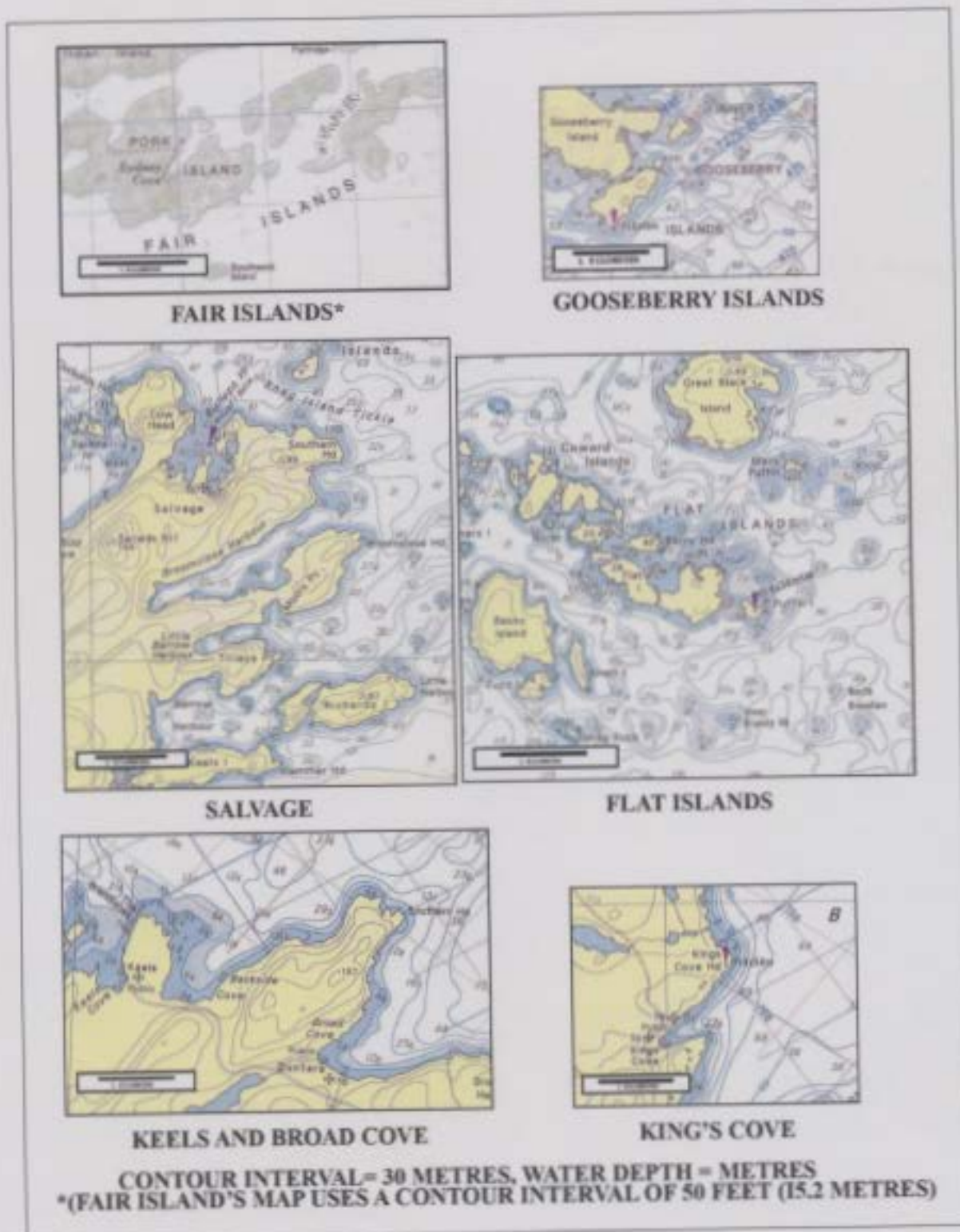


Map 6.2: Pinchard's Island, Pouch Island, Greenspond, Pig Island, Ship Island, and Newell's Island, Bonavista Bay<sup>23</sup>

Northern Bonavista Bay harbours are characterized by a preponderance of reefs shoals and rocks that made near-shore navigation dangerous for resident fishermen. As a

<sup>23</sup> Pinchard's Island, Pouch Island and Greenspond maps created using Sheet 4857, Indian Bay to Wadham Islands, Bonavista Bay, Ottawa: Canadian Hydrographic Survey, 1999; 19<sup>th</sup> century map of Greenspond Harbours created using Bonavista Bay Approaches to Pool's Harbour and Greenspond from a British Survey, 1868; North America, Newfoundland East Coast, Sheet 580, Washington, D.C.: Hydrographic Office, Secretary of the Navy, October, 1903; Enlargement of Greenspond Harbour created using Airphoto A18842-104, 103 Line 59W (103-137), 1: 15,840, Mines and Technical Surveys, Government of Canada, 1964-1968

result, inshore fishery activity would have required extreme care and considerable knowledge of the local submarine environment to ensure a safe navigation at sea. Pinchard's Island and Pouch Island provided fishing stations that were located several kilometres southeast of Cape Freels. However, the small size and remote location of these islands from the mainland meant that fishermen were very likely to be exposed to adverse wind and weather conditions from all directions, especially in winter. Greenspond Harbour is situated on the south-east portion of Greenspond Island, and is sheltered from the elements by natural, physical boundaries. Map 6.2 shows that Greenspond Harbour is protected from the elements by a series of small islands which comprise the southern portion of its channel. Ship Island contains a cove opening south-westward where larger vessels found convenient, sheltered anchorage. It is interesting to note that the basic locations of 19<sup>th</sup> century fishing rooms do not substantially differ from those existing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Map 6.3: Central (Inner) Bonavista Bay<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Fair Islands map created using St. Brendan's, Newfoundland, 2 C/13 & C/14, Edition 3, Ottawa: Energy, Mines and Resources, Government of Canada, 1988; Salvage map created using Sheet 4855, Bonavista Bay, Southern Portion, Ottawa: Canadian Hydrographic Survey, 1991; Maps created using Sheet LC 4854, Catalina Harbour and Inner Gooseberry Islands, Ottawa Canadian Hydrographic Survey, 1997; Gooseberry

Central or inner Bonavista Bay contained twelve fishing stations in Magistrate Bland's register that were scattered along the west and south reaches of the bay (see Figure 6.2). The area has a distinct insular and peninsular morphology, and 18<sup>th</sup> century fishing stations usually occupied shore positions as near the centre of the bay as possible. It contains a multitude of reefs, rocks and islands that made inshore navigation very difficult, but their presence also suggests the presence of many inshore fishing grounds. However, central Bonavista Bay harbours were far removed from the productive fisheries found off Cape Freels and Cape Bonavista, and thus could not likely support intensive, large-scale fishery activity. However, the Fair Island map (Map 6.3) shows the position of several 20<sup>th</sup> century fishing rooms which may suggest where 18<sup>th</sup> century fishery operations were found. Flat Islands are found approximately 10 kilometres directly south of Inner Gooseberry Islands<sup>25</sup>. These harbours contain land that is well-suited for fishing room establishment, but perhaps fishing grounds in this vicinity could only support small-scale fishery activity. Salvage and Barrow Harbour, by contrast, were situated near deep water harbours, and thus were somewhat less suitable for inshore cod fishery activity. Barrow Harbour was used primarily as a depot for fish processed in Greenspond and King's Cove. It served as a place for ship lading and repair, and provided a salt storage facility in central Bonavista Bay. Tickle Cove, Red Cliff Island and Open Hall are found in the extreme south-western portion of central Bonavista Bay. Tickle Cove is contained within an elongated and sheltered harbour in southern Bonavista Bay. Red

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Island map created using Sheet 4857, Indian Bay to Wadham Islands, Ottawa: Canadian Hydrographic Survey, 1999; Flat Islands map created using Sheet 4855, Bonavista Bay, Southern Portion, Ottawa: Canadian Hydrographic Survey, 1991; Keels and King's Cove maps created using Sheet LC 4854, Catalina Harbour and Inner Gooseberry Islands, Ottawa Canadian Hydrographic Survey, 1997;

<sup>25</sup> Macpherson 1977: 107

Cliff Island is a tiny island found just offshore from the mainland roughly halfway between Open Hole and Tickle Cove. There are many small islets and rocks eastward of the island, but this area was near deep water ranging from 10 to 80 meters near shore. This area probably supported only seasonal fisheries for much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>26</sup>. King's Cove, Keels and Broad Cove occupy the south-eastern portion of central Bonavista Bay. Keels is located on a peninsula separating Backside Cove and Broad Cove that protrudes northward into Bonavista Bay. Broad Cove occupies a wide harbour opening northeast into the bay, and offers minimal shelter to windward. A few offshore rocks are found along the northeast coast, but the harbour's south-western portion was suitable for fishing room establishment. King's Cove is situated on the south coast of Bonavista Bay in a small, funnel shaped harbour opening seaward toward the northeast. Peninsulas forming the harbour have relatively high elevations, but flat land suitable for room establishment is found in the harbour's southeast portion. King's Cove was developed during the 1780's, and represents an expansion of fishing rooms and settlement from Bonavista into a better sheltered area. But this place had a much more limited inshore fishery potential. King's Cove was settled by both English and Irish people as evidenced by surname analysis<sup>27</sup>. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a considerable number of young Irish males arrived seeking employment. Prospects near St. John's were discouraging, but a chance to work and to secure land on the frontier enticed some of them northward. Some Irish immigrants came directly to this northern frontier.

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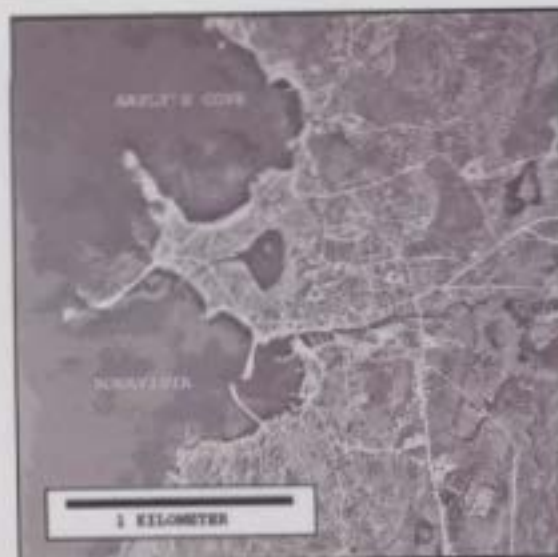
<sup>26</sup> Long 1998: 1-13

<sup>27</sup> Handcock 2003: 89





CONTOUR INTERVAL = 30 METRES  
WATER DEPTH = METRES



## BONAVISTA HARBOUR AND BAYLEY'S COVE

Map 6.4: Bonavista and Bayley's Cove, Bonavista Bay<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Bonavista and Bayley's Cove map created using Sheet LC 4854, Catalina Harbour and Inner Gooseberry Islands, Ottawa: Canadian Hydrographic Survey, 1997; Bonavista and Bayley's Cove map created using Air Photo A 18962-43, 11 NAPL Reproduction Centre, Ottawa: Mines and Resources, Government of Canada, 1965; Historical map of Bonavista and Bayley's Cove in Prowse (1895) 2002: 238

Bonavista is a collective name referring to a group of fishery harbours that included Bonavista Harbour, Bayley's Cove, and various other coastal areas extending toward Cape Bonavista (see Map 6.4). The area is low-lying and extremely exposed to wind from all directions. No safe anchorage could be provided for larger vessels and ocean-going ships, not even during summer months. However, the waters surrounding Bonavista represent arguably the most prolific and reliable inshore cod fishing grounds in Newfoundland. In late spring and early summer, cod generally came close to the coast where fishermen harvested them until early fall. Bonavista was a prolific fishing locality, but lacked the physical amenities to become a major commercial centre because it could not shelter ships safely. Some ships using Bonavista had to anchor elsewhere such as Barrow Harbour, Trinity, or Catalina.

. . . in 1729 Henry Jones, . . . reported 200 would winter at Bonavista; the Scheme of the Fishery reports 383 winterers for the whole of the bay about this time, so perhaps something more than half the population was resident at Bonavista town and the rest in the smaller settlements on the Bonavista peninsula, and the archipelago to the northward.<sup>29</sup>

Bonavista became a main locus of expansion for English Shore fishermen during the late-17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many inshore fishermen arranged themselves irregularly around the coast wherever suitable fishing rooms could be established. In most places, stages and wharves needed to be dismantled and drawn up on shore to save them from destruction by winds, tides, and ice. Bayley's Cove is located immediately north of Bonavista in a circular harbour opening northwest with plenty of flat land suitable for fishing room establishment. Although Bayley's Cove and Bonavista Harbour are geographically adjacent, settlement characteristics are quite dissimilar between them.

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<sup>29</sup> Head 1976: 285; See also Handcock 1989: 117



Using a historical map of the area (Map 6.4), we can examine the organization of fishing rooms and flakes. Bonavista Harbour clearly supported more people, fishing rooms, and intensive fishery activity than Bayley's Cove.

### **6.2.3: NAME AND RESIDENCE (SETTLEMENT/TOWN) OF THE CLAIMANT**

A majority of Newfoundland fishing rooms supported small-scale *planter* enterprises that survived primarily through the proceeds of dry-processed cod. These properties usually accommodated family fisheries employing a small staff of servants and sundry shore labourers who operated one or two boats<sup>30</sup>. It was, however, difficult to differentiate between fishing rooms held by planters and bye-boat keepers as their scales of operations were often quite similar<sup>31</sup>.

While most Bonavista Bay fishing rooms were usually founded by people of limited means, they eventually contained stages, flakes, storage buildings, dwellings, and gardens that were modified and improved over many years. Several fishing rooms were also claimed by *merchant* firms (#5, #6, #15, etc.). Merchant fishing rooms, although few in number- only fifteen properties- nevertheless exercised a great deal of influence over shore space ownership in Bonavista Bay (Table 6.2). I have attempted to differentiate between planter and merchant fishing rooms when analyzing the data in order to compare and to contrast the nature of property claim and type of fishery enterprise appearing in the main Bonavista Bay fishing harbours (Greenspond and Bonavista).

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<sup>30</sup> Handcock 1989: 119

<sup>31</sup> Pope 2004: 42

REGION BY TYPE OF ENTERPRISE FOR BONAVISTA BAY FISHING ROOMS, 1805-1806					
REGION	TYPE OF ENTERPRISE			TOTAL	%
	PLANTER		MERCHANT		
NORTH	26		6	32	35
CENTRAL	8		2	10	11
SOUTH	42		7	49	54
TOTAL	76		15	91	
%	84		16		100

Table 6.2: Region by Type of Enterprise for Bonavista Bay Fishing Rooms, 1805-1806

Table 6.2 shows that over half of Bonavista Bay's fishing rooms were located in the south (Bonavista and Bayley's Cove), and northern harbours contained over three times the number of fishing rooms as in central. In all, planters claimed seventy-six fishing rooms (84%) while merchants held only fifteen (16%). Planters, therefore, claimed more than six times the number of Bonavista Bay fishing rooms as merchants.

#### 6.2.4: NATURE OF THE CLAIM

In the fishing room register, the nature of the property claim was divided into three categories: *right of original building and possession*, *right of inheritance*, and *right of purchase*. The Bonavista Bay coastline was usually developed by English sedentary fishermen who instigated tenure claims by clearing shore space, erecting fishery infrastructure, and conducting small-scale fishery operations for a period of several years. Under English law, fishing rooms claimed under these conditions were described as being held "*in right of original possession*", or "*built by the claimant*". Fishing rooms that achieved *real property* status became personal assets that could be bequeathed through right of inheritance, thus preserving the original claim.

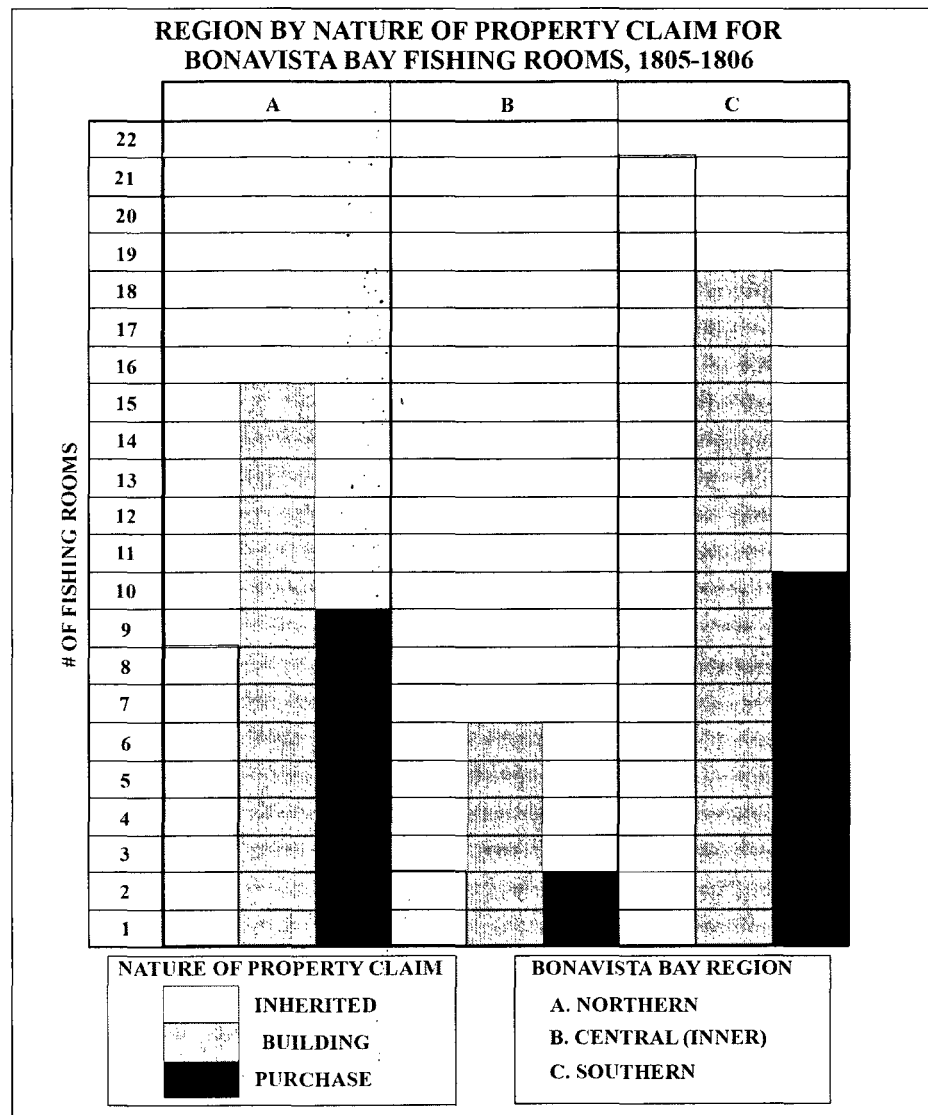


Figure 6.3: Region by Nature of Property Claim for Bonavista Bay Fishing Rooms, 1805-1806

Figure 6.3 shows the nature of property claim for fishing rooms for northern, central and southern Bonavista Bay fishery harbours. Of the 91 Bonavista Bay fishing rooms, thirty-two were found in the north (35%), ten in central (11%), and the remaining forty-nine in the south (54%). In all, thirty-nine fishing rooms were claimed through right of building (43%), thirty-one through inheritance (34%), and twenty-one by purchase (23%). Seventy of the ninety-one Bonavista Bay fishing rooms (77%) were claimed

either by right of building or inheritance, with the remaining one quarter claimed by purchase (23%). Approximately four in five fishing rooms, therefore, were claimed by original builders or their descendents which suggests that maintaining fishing rooms within families had become extremely important for Bonavista Bay fishermen by 1805.

Long-term fishing room ownership remained uncertain given the capricious nature of inshore cod availability, and reliance upon a truck system of credit which routinely placed sedentary fishermen in trying financial predicaments. As real property, fishing rooms were recognized as valuable fixed assets that could be legally sold through right of purchase. New claimants benefited from the tireless efforts of original claimants who created viable commercial sites complete with buildings and shore infrastructure. But payments realized through these sales probably left the former owner poorly compensated given the substantial time and labour expended to establish and maintain the fishing room.

As soon as there was property- there developed a property market. While the majority of sedentary fishermen lacked the financial resources to buy property, some merchant firms were in an excellent position to purchase fishing rooms. Merchants conducting salt fish and supply businesses possessed the financial means to acquire coastal properties for which they had accumulated considerable practical and financial knowledge. Fishing rooms were the key to controlling Bonavista Bay fisheries, and merchants used their capital, supply and trade connections, and logistical knowledge of the area to gain control over the most lucrative fishing rooms available.

### 6.2.5: NAME AND RESIDENCE OF THE OCCUPANT

REGION BY TYPE OF FISHING ROOM OCCUPANT (CLAIMANT/OCCUPANT) FOR BONA VISTA BAY FISHING ROOMS, 1805-1806				
REGION	# OF FISHING ROOMS OCCUPIED BY PLANTERS	# OF FISHING ROOMS OCCUPIED BY LEASEHOLDERS	TOTAL	%
NORTH	28	4	32	35
CENTRAL	10	--	10	11
SOUTH	37	12	49	54
TOTAL	75	16	91	
%	82	18		100

Table 6.3: Region by Type of Fishing Room Occupant for Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806

In contrast to English Shore fisheries, Bonavista Bay fishing room establishment was not here hampered by the supervening rights of English migratory fishermen, or fishing admiralty system privilege. The English government imposed various property regulations of consequence to Newfoundland, but these did not distinguish between fishery activities undertaken by room *claimants* or *occupants*, provided fishing rooms consistently fulfilled their primary commercial function. Property titles could, therefore, be preserved, even by claimants living outside the area, through *leasing*. Sixteen fishing rooms were occupied by leaseholders (Table 6.3).

### 6.2.6: FOR WHAT CONSIDERATION

REGION BY FISHING ROOMS OCCUPIED BY LEASHOLDERS FOR BONAVISTA BAY, 1805-1806					
REGION	INHERITANCE		BUILDING	PURCHASE	TOTAL
NORTH	14- (£ 4), 22- (--),	17- (--) 25-(£ 4)			4
CENTRAL					--
SOUTH	31- (£ 2.5) 50- (£ 4) 54-(£ 12) 65- (--)	48- (--) 51-(£ 35) 64-(£ 30)	60- (£ 9) 61- (£ 10) 63- (£ 4)	53- (£10) 72- (£10)	12
TOTAL	11		3	2	16

Table 6.4: Region by Fishing Room Occupant for Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806

Of these sixteen fishing rooms occupied by leaseholders, fourteen were initially claimed by right of building or inheritance which preserved the site's function as a commercial asset for its current owner (Table 6.4). Generally, leased properties were claimed by merchant firms who managed their Bonavista Bay interests from headquarters in Trinity Bay (#17), Notre Dame Bay (#14), St. John's (#60), or Poole, England (#22 and #51). Leaseholder agreements enabled absentee claimants or their beneficiaries who continually received income from the Newfoundland fishery<sup>32</sup>. In Bland's register, south coast harbours contained three times as many leased fishing rooms as the north, and central Bonavista Bay had no leased properties.

Fishing room lease rates were probably determined according to their size, location, and shore infrastructure which included existing buildings, flakes, dwellings, and sundry storage buildings known as *stores* (See descriptions for Rooms #51, #54 and #63). Average catch rates for each fishing room may also have been considered. Table 6.4 lists a yearly lease rate for two of four northern Bonavista Bay fishing rooms of £4 while the twelve properties in Bonavista Harbour had lease rates ranging from £2.5 to £35.

#### **6.2.7: EXTENT OF THE ROOM...**

Magistrate Bland's register included observations regarding how fishing room boundary lines were adapted to diverse coastal environments. Boundary lines were measured in *yards* (0.9144 metres), and usually included compass bearings for ease of identification. Outbuildings were sometimes included in property descriptions, but only to define a fishing room's position relative to that of adjacent fishing rooms. This is unfortunate because a detailed accounting of outbuildings would have aided our

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<sup>32</sup> Handcock 1989: 229

understanding of 18<sup>th</sup> century Bonavista Bay settlement. Also, information concerning land that had been cleared for agricultural use or pasture would have significantly broadened our appreciation for this area, but it, too, is lacking.

Fishing room descriptions in the register strongly suggest that the nature of property ownership, as defined under the Newfoundland Act (1699), had undergone significant changes during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Fishing rooms that had been dismantled and sold off in pieces to new owners after the original claimant's death sometimes represented properties that could no longer support the type and scale of commercial activities normally associated with planter fisheries (See Room #63 and #44). Small plots of land or houses bequeathed to surviving spouses functioned more for homesteading than commercial fishery purposes (#47 and #57). Some properties consisted only of "a single flake" that was constructed "for curing fish brought from the North shore [of Bonavista Bay]" (#38 and #52). By 1805, Bonavista Bay harbours included active fishing room operations, a number of void spaces that were previously utilized as fishing rooms (#54 and #27), traditional ship's rooms (#52), and unoccupied coastal spaces that were judged somehow unsuitable for inshore fishery activity (#14, #16, #25, #30, and #34). Nevertheless, by 1805, fishing rooms that were held initially under the Newfoundland Act had now achieved real property status, and could be legally retained, sold, purchased or bequeathed (in whole or in part) under English Common Law.

A majority of Bonavista Bay fishing rooms occupied positions directly at waterside, and their descriptions included foreshore boundary measurements determined "to the high water mark" (#1, #17, #20), "to the extremes of the landwash line" (#56), or "behind the landwash line" (#72). This suggests that property claimants gained exclusive rights

from fishing rooms to the water. However, a few fishing rooms that were “erected upon the harbour pond” in Bonavista (#60, #59 and #61) were situated some distance removed from the Bonavista bay coast (See Map 6.4). In Greenspond harbour, a fishing room’s landward extent generally consisted of “two parallel lines running inland from the extremes of the landwash line” (Rooms # 5 to #12). In this area, a fishing room’s rearward property line was “bounded backwards by the open country, an advantage equally possessed by every room on the North side of Pond [Greenspond] Island” (#5). Perhaps rearward boundaries were not as important as foreshore boundaries because commercial operations were usually concentrated directly at waterside.

In competitive harbours, such as Bonavista Harbour and Greenspond Harbour, many fishing room boundary descriptions were expressed in relation to neighbouring fishing rooms. Read’s room (#6) was “bounded on the SE<sup>t</sup> by room No. 5 and on the NW<sup>t</sup> by room No. 7”. Rolles room (#56) followed a “compass line extending from Burton’s room along the landwash S<sup>th</sup> forty yards, then SE<sup>t</sup> forty yards to the stage”.

Bland’s register contains several terms to describe areas of land that were not utilized in 1805. A number of fishing rooms were bounded by “unoccupied ground” (#14, #16 and #34), but this only means that the land was not currently used to support fishery activity or settlement. Ryan’s room (#40) was “situated upon broken ground on a hill” and “on the SE<sup>t</sup> by inaccessible rocks which admit no extension of the fishery”. Ryder’s room (#53) was “bounded by Mockbeggar Marsh”. Brown’s room (#25) was “bounded on the S<sup>th</sup> by a void space unfit for the fishery, being too exposed to the sea” while Fitzgerald’s room (room 30) was bounded “on the SW<sup>t</sup> by a hill not proper for a



fishery”. Land that inclined steeply from waterside was probably considered unsuitable for fishery activity or homesteading.

Fishing room boundary descriptions in Magistrate Bland’s register strongly suggest that the nature of property ownership, as defined under the Newfoundland Act (1699), had undergone significant changes during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Fishing rooms that had been dismantled and sold off in pieces to new owners after the original claimant’s death sometimes resulted in properties that could no longer accommodate fishery operations (#63 and #44).

NATURE OF PROPERTY CLAIM BY TYPE OF ENTERPRISE FOR BONAVISTA BAY FISHING ROOMS, 1805-1806					
NATURE OF CLAIM	TYPE OF ENTERPRISE			TOTAL	%
	PLANTER	%	MERCHANT		
INHER.	27	30	4	31	34
BUILD	37	41	2	39	43
PURCH.	12	13	9	21	23
TOTAL	76		15	91	
%	83		17		100

Table 6.5: Nature of Claim by Type of Enterprise for Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806

Seventy-six of ninety-one fishing rooms (83%) were claimed by planters, while merchants held the remaining fifteen (17%) (Table 6.5). Of the seventy-six fishing rooms held by planters, twenty-seven were claimed by right of inheritance (30%), thirty-seven by building (41%), and twelve by purchase (13%). Planter fishermen, therefore, were much more likely to own fishing rooms that had been established by their own efforts, or that of their ancestors. Merchants claimed fifteen fishing rooms (17%) of which four were held by right of inheritance (4%), two by building (2%), and nine by purchase (10%). Merchant operations generally occupied coastal spaces found a short distance from either Cape Freels or Cape Bonavista, which sometimes involved the purchase of existing fishing rooms.

By 1805, Bonavista Bay harbours included active fishing rooms, void spaces utilized previously as fishing rooms (#54 and #27), active or abandoned ship rooms (#52), and coastal spaces judged unsuitable for commercial fishery activities (14, #16, #25, #30, and #34).

### 6.3 FISHING ROOM SHORE FRONTAGE DESCRIPTIONS

Magistrate Bland's register included shore frontage measurements for only sixty-two (56%) of the ninety-one Bonavista Bay fishing rooms (See Figure 6.5). Shore frontage descriptions were recorded under the "Extent of the room. . ." column (Appendix 1, Table 1). Central Bonavista Bay fishing room descriptions, however, usually did not include foreshore boundary measurements. Of the sixty-two remaining fishing room descriptions, twenty-two had shoreline boundaries of less than 50 yards (36%), twenty-three ranged between 51 and 90 yards (37%), eleven between 91 and 130 yards (18%), and six were larger than 131 yards (9%). A majority of Bonavista Bay fishing rooms- thirty-eight or (62%) - had shore frontage boundaries of less than 70 yards, while the remaining twenty-four rooms were larger than 71 yards (38%).

SHORE FRONTAGE BY TYPE OF ENTERPRISE FOR BONAVISTA BAY, 1805-1806					
REGION	TYPE OF ENTER.	# OF FISHING ROOMS	SHORE FRONTAGE (YDS.)	AVER. SHORE FRONTAGE (YDS.)	% OF TOTAL SHORELINE
BONAVISTA BAY	PLANTER MERCHANT	49	3299	67	69
		13	1459	112	31
TOTAL	TOTAL	62	4758		100

Table 6.6: Shore Frontage by Type of Enterprise for Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806

**SHORE FRONTAGE FOR SELECTED FISHING ROOMS  
IN BONA VISTA BAY, 1805-1806**

18								
17								
16								
15								
14								
13								
12								
11								
10								
9								
8								
7								
6								
5								
4								
3								
2								
1								
	Less Than 30	31-50	51-70	71-90	91-110	111-130	131-150	More Than 151
	SHORE FRONTAGE (YARDS)							

Figure 6.4: Shoreline Frontage for Selected Fishing Rooms in Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806

Forty-nine fishing rooms (79%) were claimed by planters and thirteen by merchants (21%). Planters claimed 3299 yards or (69%) of the total shore frontage recorded while merchants held 1459 yards or (31%). The average shore frontage claimed by planters was 67 yards while merchant properties averaged 112 yards. Planters claimed forty-nine of the sixty-two fishing rooms recorded (79%) and 3299 yards of shoreline (69%) while merchants claimed only thirteen fishing rooms (21%) and 1459 yards of shoreline (31%). So, while merchants held only 21% of the fishing rooms, they controlled over 30% of the

total available shoreline, and their fishing room frontages averaged twice as large as planter fishing rooms.

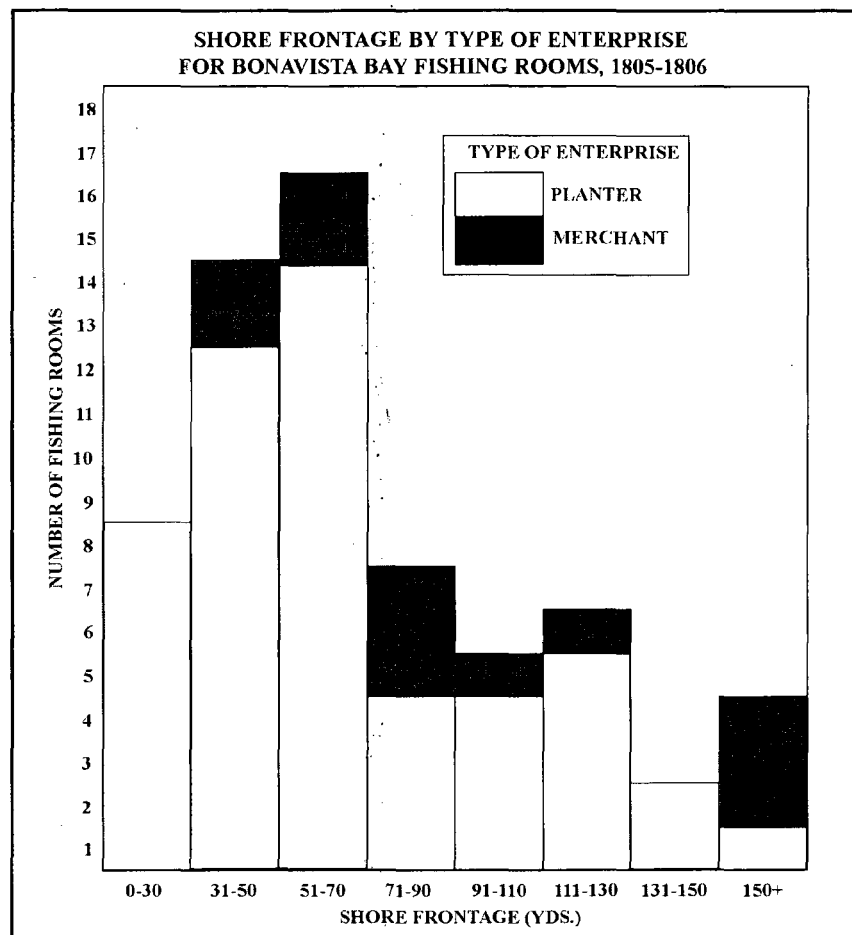


Figure 6.5: Shore Frontage by Type of Enterprise for Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806<sup>33</sup>

Figure 6.5 shows fishing room shore frontage by type of enterprise. Of the sixty-two fishing rooms described, planters claimed forty-nine (79%) while merchants held the remaining thirteen rooms (21%). Thirty-eight fishing rooms contained less than seventy yards shore frontage (61%). Of these, thirty-four were claimed by planters (55%) and four by merchants (6%). For fishing rooms ranging from seventy-one to one hundred and

<sup>33</sup> Note: Figure 6.6 only contains shoreline measurements for the thirteen merchant fishing rooms located in north and south Bonavista Bay. Central Bonavista Bay merchant room descriptions did not provide shore frontage measurements.

thirty yards, planters claimed thirteen (21%) while five were held by merchants (8%). For fishing rooms containing shore frontages that were larger than one hundred and thirty yards, three were claimed by planters (5%), and the remaining three by merchants (5%).

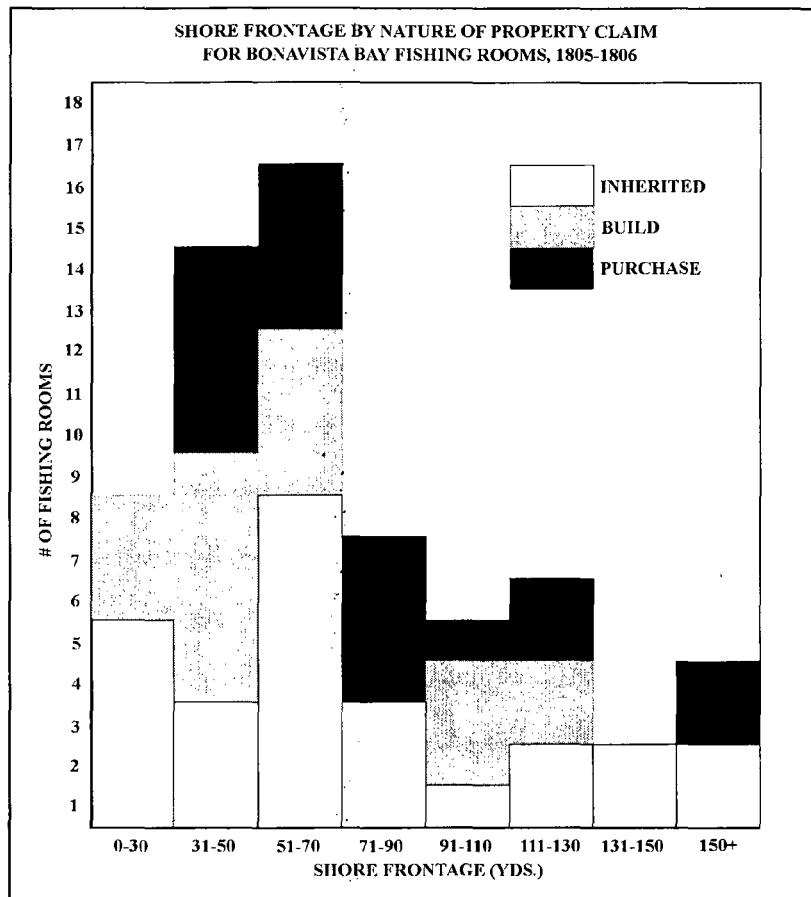


Figure 6.6: Shore Frontage by Nature of Property Claim for Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806<sup>34</sup>

Figure 6.6 shows that forty-eight of the sixty-two fishing rooms described (71%) were claimed by inheritance or building, and eighteen (29%) by purchase. Of the fishing rooms with shore frontages smaller than 70 yards, twenty-nine were claimed by right of inheritance or building (46%), and nine by purchase (15%). Clearly, the majority of Bonavista Bay fishing rooms (61%) comprised shore boundaries smaller than 70 yards.

<sup>34</sup> Note: Figure 6.7 only contains shoreline measurements for the thirteen merchant fishing rooms located in north and south Bonavista Bay. Central Bonavista Bay merchant room descriptions did not provide shore frontage measurements.

Perhaps an examination of the actual foreshore measurements would be useful in determining how fishing room shore frontages were owned and operated in 1805-1806.

NATURE OF PROPERTY CLAIM BY SHORE FRONTAGE FOR BONAVISTA BAY FISHING ROOMS, 1805-1806					
REGION	NATURE OF CLAIM	# OF FISHING ROOMS	SHORE FRONTAGE (YDS.)	AVER. SHORE FRONTAGE (YDS.)	% OF TOTAL SHORELINE
BONAVISTA BAY	INHER.	26	1979	76	42
	BUILD	18	1156	64	24
	PURCH.	18	1623	90	34
	TOTAL	62	4758	77	100

Table 6.7: Shore Frontage by Nature of Property Claim for Bonavista Bay, 1805-1806

Tables 6.5 and 6.6 reveal striking similarities between the type of enterprise and the nature of property ownership for Bonavista Bay fishing rooms. In total, twenty-six fishing rooms were claimed by inheritance (42%), eighteen by right of building (29%), and eighteen by right of purchase (29%). Fishing rooms held by inheritance encompassed 1979 yards (42%) with an average shore frontage of 76 yards. Fishing rooms held by right of building encompassed 1156 yards (24%) with an average shore frontage per room of 64 yards. Those held by purchase encompassed 1623 yards with an average shore frontage per room of 90 yards. Purchased fishing rooms, therefore, contained somewhat larger shore frontages than those claimed through inheritance or building.

Of the sixty-two fishing rooms described in Table 6.7, forty-four were claimed either by right of inheritance or building (71%), and eighteen by purchase (29%). Of the total shore frontage of 4758 yards, 3135 yards were claimed by either inheritance or building (66%), and 1623 yards by purchase (34%). Therefore, it was more than likely for shore frontage to be claimed by building or inheritance than by purchase.

SHORE FRONTAGE (YDS.) BY NATURE OF PROPERTY CLAIM AND TYPE OF ENTERPRISE FOR BONA VISTA BAY REGIONS, 1805-1806						
REGION	NATURE OF CLAIM	TYPE OF ENTERPRISE			TOTAL	%
		PLANTER	%	MERCH.		
BONA VISTA BAY	INHER. BUILD PURCH.	1462	31	517	1979	42
		1156	24	--	1156	24
		681	14	942	1623	34
TOTAL		3299		1459	4758	
%		69		31		100

Table 6.8: Shore Frontage by Nature of Claim and Type of Enterprise, 1805-1806

Table 6.8 shows shore frontage by nature of property claim and type of enterprise. Of the 4758 yards reported by Magistrate Bland, planters held 3299 yards (69%), and merchants held 1459 yards (31%). Planters claimed 2618 yards either by right of inheritance or building (55%), and only 681 yards by right of purchase (14%). Planters claimed four times as much shore space by right of inheritance or building than they did by purchase. Merchants claimed only 517 yards by right of inheritance (11%), none by right of building, and 942 yards by right of purchase (20%). Merchants were twice as likely to claim shore frontage through purchase rather than inheritance. So, planters claimed forty-nine Bonavista Bay fishing rooms (79%) - almost four times as much as did merchants (21%) - and 3299 yards of shore space (69%) - more than twice the amount of shore space held by merchants. So, while planters claimed four times as many fishing rooms as merchants, they controlled only twice as much of the improved, commercial shore frontage in Bonavista Bay.

The fishing room provided a practical commercial land use design that balanced the spatial distribution of inshore fishing grounds with coastal land where cod catches could be efficiently processed into salt fish for export. Locally-based merchant firms organized the movement of salt fish to overseas markets, and supplied fishermen with European

goods and equipment on credit. The fishery represented a self-perpetuating, seasonal resource which nurtured Newfoundland's family-based economies, and joined their fortunes to an international trade network.

Image 2.4, an 18<sup>th</sup> century depiction of King's Cove, Bonavista Bay, clearly shows how the fishing room organized inshore cod fisheries and the human population upon the Newfoundland coast. While much of the economic activity is concentrated directly at waterside, the drawing includes a number of structures found some distance from shore that illustrate how these settlements were organized. We see several private dwellings, a church and "burying ground", and a number of vegetable gardens dotting the landscape. We might expect that these features were joined by paths and roads that were traversed regularly by horse-drawn carts, fishermen/farmers, and romping children. Map 6.4, the aerial view of Bonavista Harbour and Bayley's Cove, shows the spatial distribution of late-18<sup>th</sup> century fishing rooms in the area. We can imagine how the human population was distributed around and among the fishing rooms, and the scurry of activity there during the fishing season. Each of the sites examined in this thesis were functioning communities, each with their own particular cultural identities and historical backgrounds. All of the seasonal fishing stations, fishing communities, and towns in Bonavista Bay shared an intimate connection with the sea and inshore fishery, but by the late-18<sup>th</sup> century, many of these harbours contained some measure of social organization that had evolved as communities became more firmly established.

Magistrate Bland's register contains a wealth of historical information concerning the location, types of property claim and enterprise, fishing room size, and the processes underlying Bonavista Bay settlement during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The fishing room design



supplied the primary element in contriving functional coastal communities, both inside and outside the English Shore. Detailed property information has been utilized to reconstruct what was, in essence, a cadastral survey of Bonavista Bay. Figures 6.7 to 6.18 reveal the spatial organization of several fishing harbours in 1805-1806.

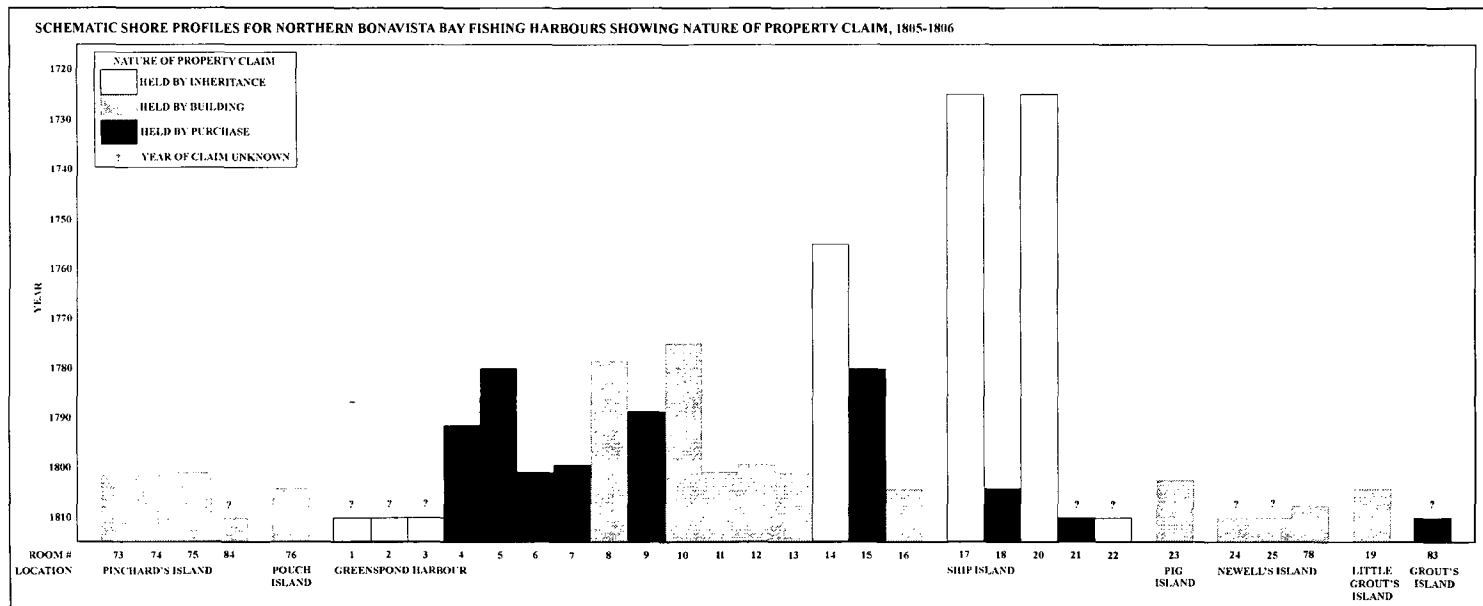


Figure 6.7: Shore Profiles for Northern Bonavista Bay Fishing Harbours by Nature of Property Claim, 1805-1806

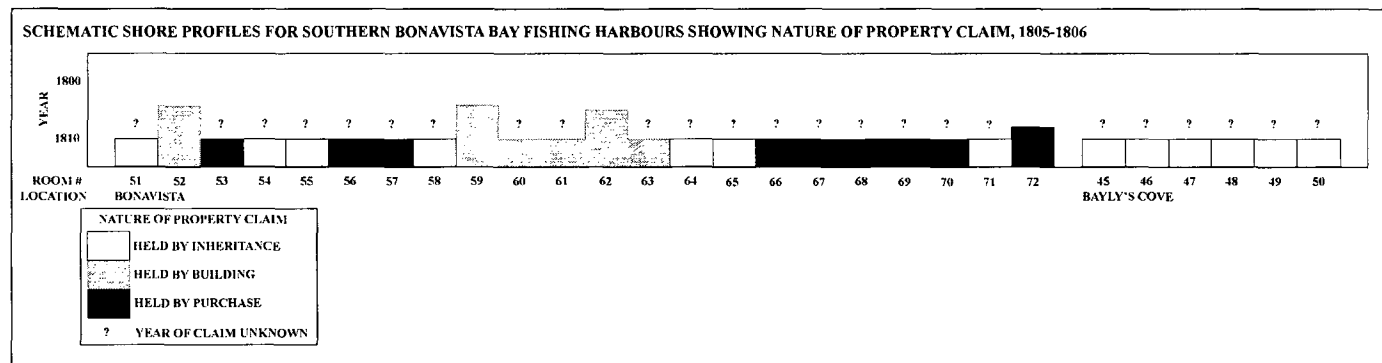


Figure 6.8: Shore Profiles for Southern Bonavista Bay Fishing Harbours By Nature of Property Claim, 1805-1806

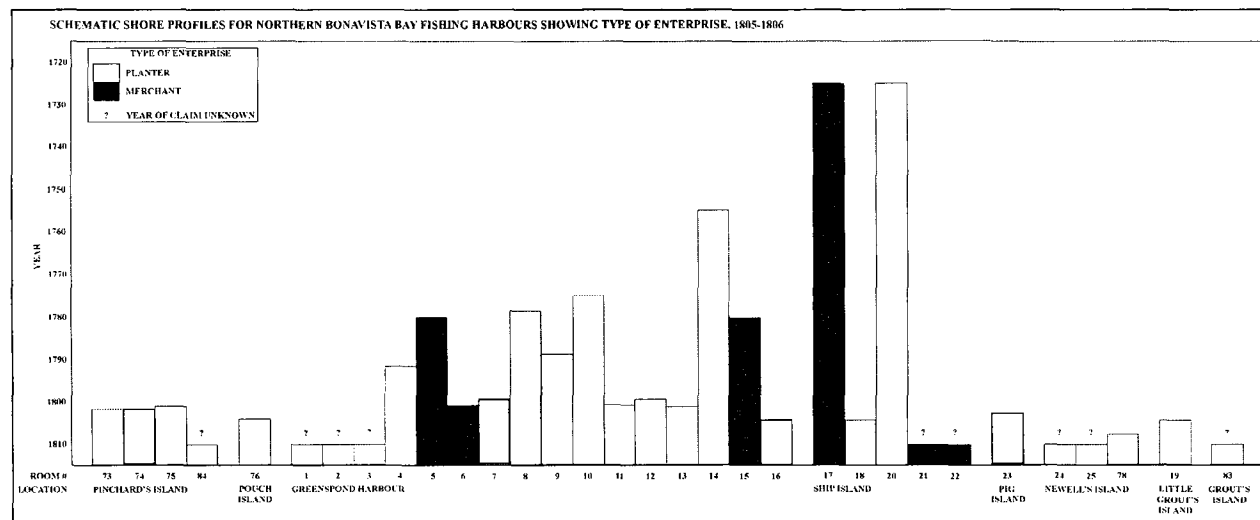


Figure 6.9: Shore Profiles for Northern Bonavista Bay Fishing Harbours by Type of Enterprise, 1805-1806

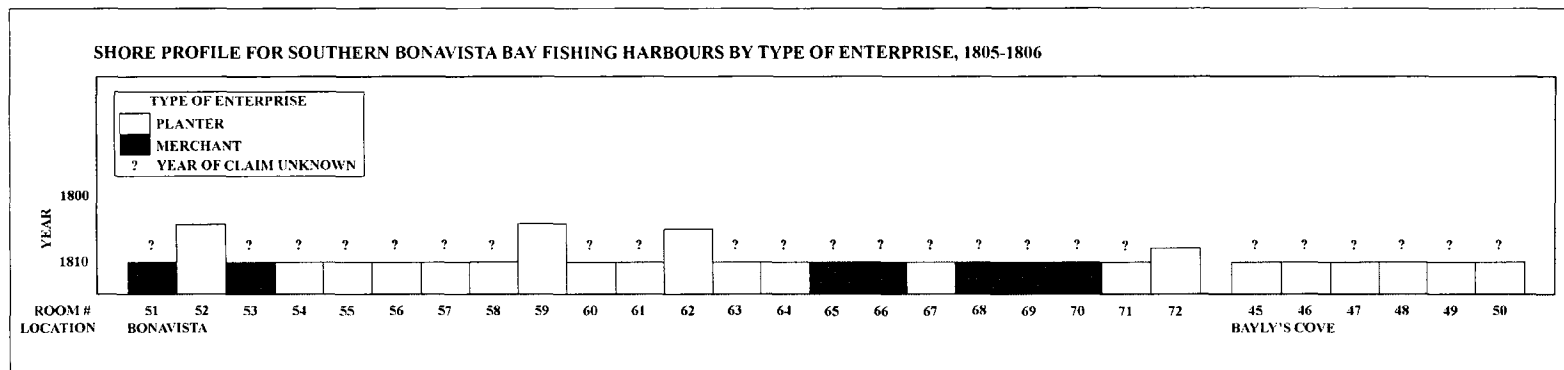


Figure 6.10: Shore Profiles for Southern Bonavista Bay Fishing Harbours by Type of Enterprise, 1805-1806

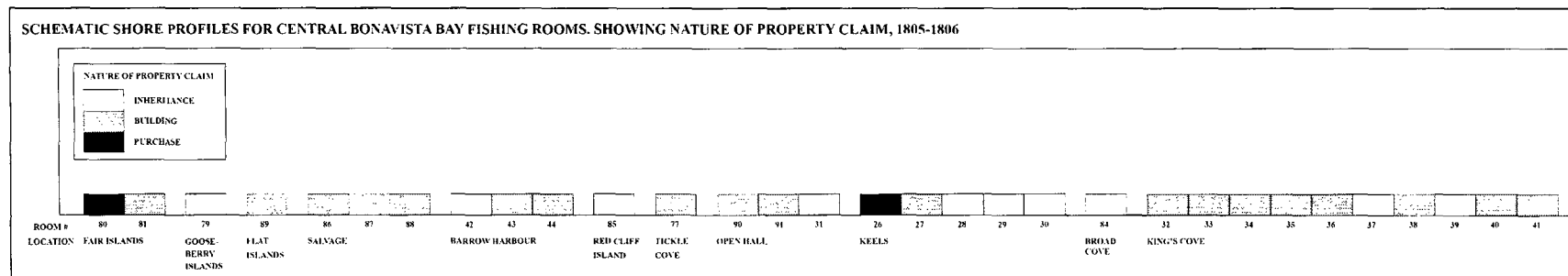


Figure 6.11: Shore Profiles for Central Bonavista Bay Fishing Harbours by Nature of Property Claim, 1805-1806

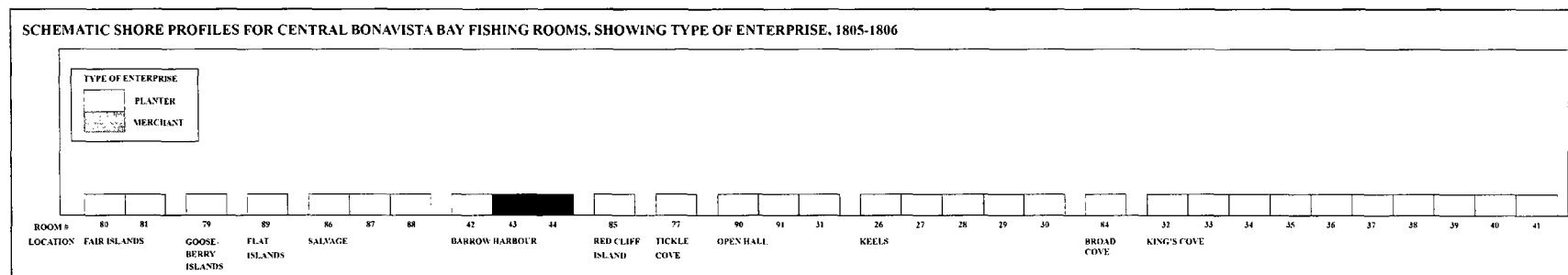
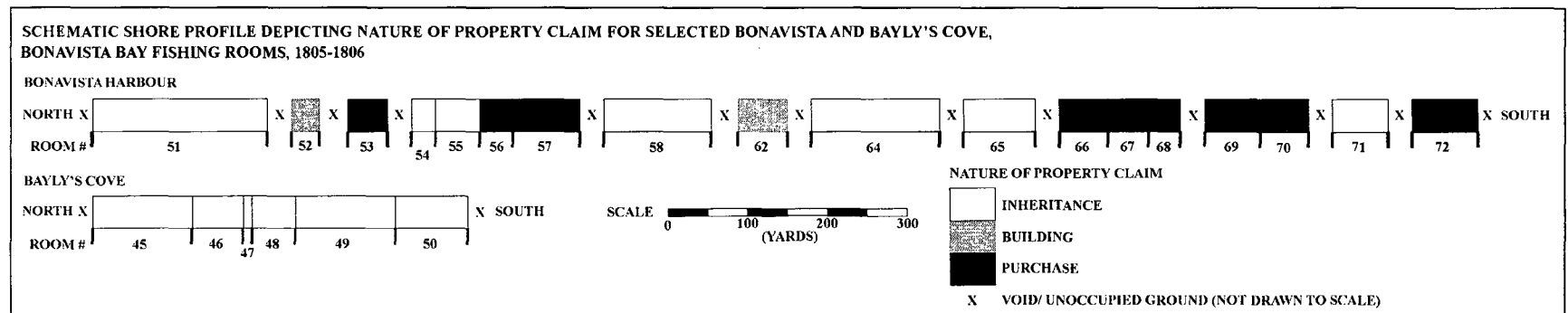
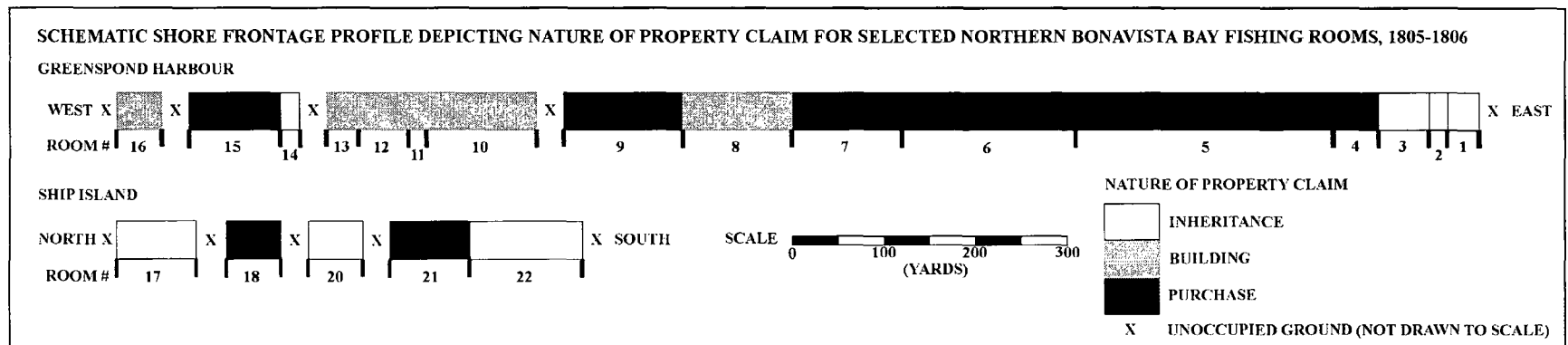


Figure 6.12: Shore Profiles for Central Bonavista Bay Fishing Harbours by Type of Enterprise, 1805-1806



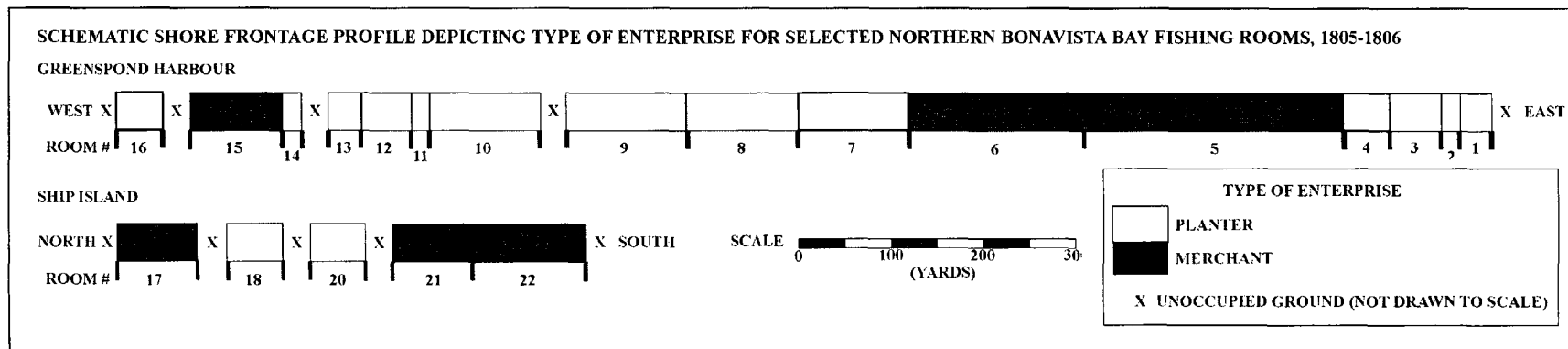


Figure 6.15: Schematic Shore Frontage Profile Depicting Type of Enterprise for Northern Bonavista Bay Fishing Rooms

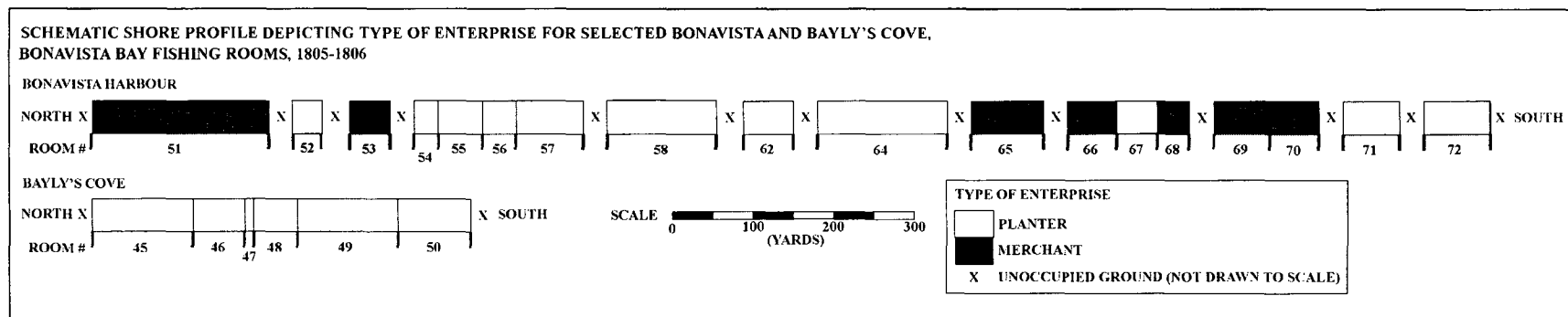


Figure 6.16: Schematic Shore Frontage Profile Depicting Type of Enterprise for Bonavista and Bayly's Cove Fishing Rooms

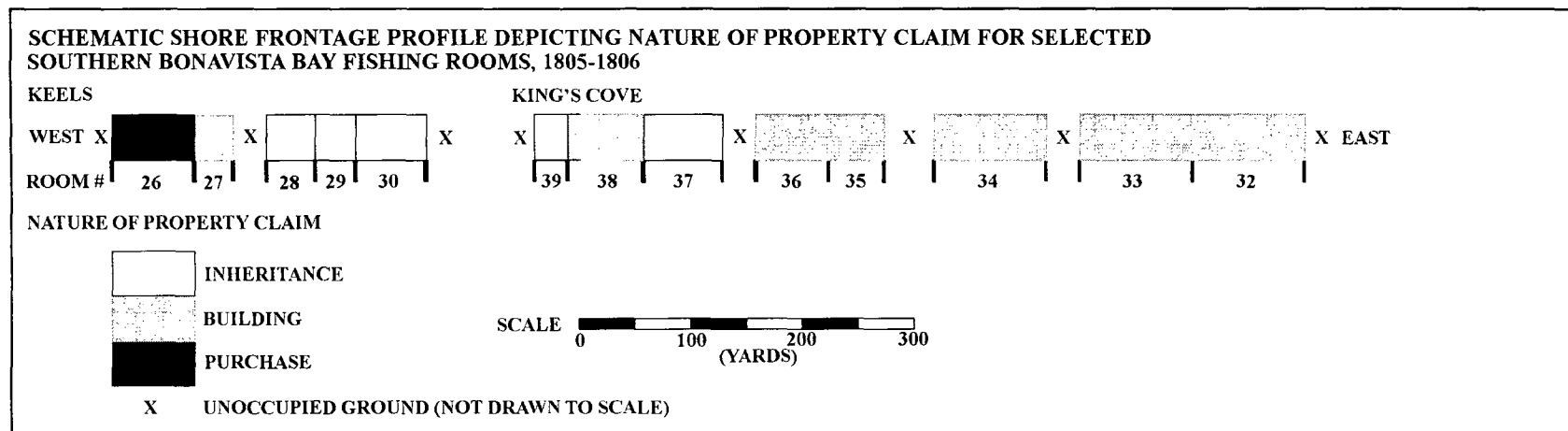


Figure 6.17: Schematic Shore Frontage Profile Depicting Nature of Property Claim for Central Bonavista Bay Fishing Rooms

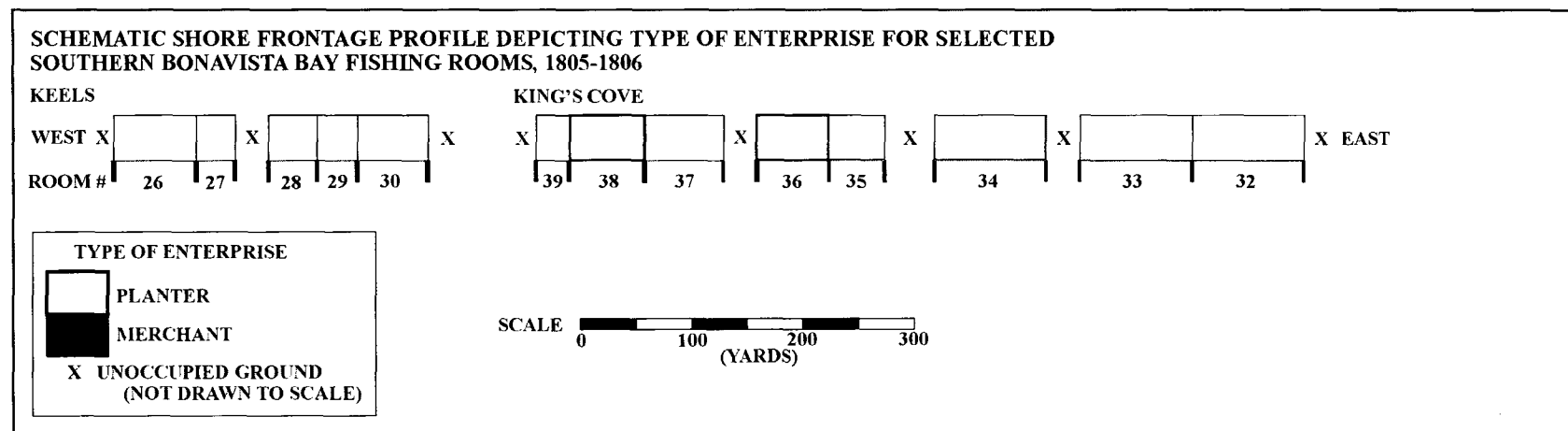


Figure 6.18: Schematic Shore Frontage Profile Depicting Type of Enterprise for Central Bonavista Bay Fishing Rooms

In Magistrate Bland's register, northern Bonavista Bay contained eight fishing harbours, and thirty-two fishing rooms (Figures 6.7 and 6.9). Of these, seven were claimed by right of inheritance (22%), sixteen by building (50%), and nine by purchase (28%). Almost three-quarters of all fishing rooms in this area were established by original owners or their ancestors. There may have been English fisheries operating in Greenspond Harbour prior to 1725 (#1, #2, #3) because properties claimed by right of purchase probably displaced earlier fisheries for which we have no record (#5, #6, #15, #17, #21 and #22), But without knowing initial establishment dates, these observations are purely speculative.

Of the thirty-two fishing rooms described, twenty-six were claimed by planters (81%), and the remaining six by merchants (19%). Fishing rooms located on small islands some distance from Greenspond were all claimed by planters, and many of these were established after 1800. Fishing rooms claimed by merchants are concentrated exclusively in Greenspond Harbour and Ship Island. Ship Island contained a natural harbour that may well have been used for large vessel anchorage, and thus was of interest to large-scale salt fish exporters and those involved in the local supply trade. According to the fishing room establishment dates in the register, a number of Greenspond and Ship Island properties founded during the 1780's and 1790's, but rooms #14, #17 and #20 were reported to exist between 1725 and 1755<sup>1</sup>.

In Greenspond Harbour, purchased fishing rooms were distributed throughout the shoreline, inherited fishing rooms were concentrated in the east, and properties claimed by building were found in the west (Figures 6.14 and 6.16). Of the 1398 yards of

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<sup>1</sup> Handcock 2003: 112



improved shoreline recorded, 132 yards were claimed through inheritance (9%), 401 yards by building (29%), and 865 yards by purchase (62%). The five Ship Island fishing rooms were separated by three void spaces, and therefore somewhat less suitable for fishery activity than Greenspond Harbour. Of the 414 yards of shoreline recorded, 267 yards were claimed through inheritance (64%), and 147 yards by purchase (36%). Property ownership on Ship Island, therefore, was almost exactly opposite to that of Greenspond. Of the 1398 yards of shoreline recorded, planters claimed 829 yards (59%) and merchants 569 yards (41%). Planters and merchants claimed a similar percentage of shore frontage in Greenspond Harbour, but planters held almost four times the number of fishing rooms as merchants. Of the 414 yards of shoreline on Ship Island, planters claimed 120 yards (29%) and merchants the remaining 284 yards (71%).

Central Bonavista Bay contained eleven fishing harbours in 1805-1806 that supported thirty-one fishing rooms (Figures 6.12 and 6.13). Of these, ten were claimed by right of inheritance (32%), nineteen by building (61%), and two by purchase (7%). A vast majority of these fishing rooms were held by either inheritance or building (93%), and thus were the result of efforts expended by original builders or their ancestors. A majority of these fishing stations supported only a few fishing rooms, and probably represented sites that hosted only seasonal fishermen whose operations were based in either Greenspond or Bonavista<sup>2</sup>. Keels and King's Cove, by contrast, supported a number of fishing rooms, and represented a more established permanent settlement area that may have existed for a considerable time.

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<sup>2</sup> "Particular primary settlements played a dominant role in providing settlers for specific secondary settlements: Greenspond for Gooseberry Islands, Conception Bay (Port de Grave) for Flat Island, Bonavista for Salvage and Barrow Harbour". Macpherson 1977: 128

In the 1760's, Lester's diary records that John Black and Patrick Keen were planters in Trinity who, rather than returning to England in fall, established planter fisheries in Gooseberry Island<sup>3</sup>. Fishermen in this area produced salt fish, board and planks that were shipped to Trinity in exchange for supplies. Lester's merchant firm stationed fishing servants in Gooseberry Islands during the 1760s<sup>4</sup>. Flat Islands would not become a permanent settlement until the late 1820's as families from Greenspond and King's Cove established permanent residency here<sup>5</sup>. Salvage, like Barrow Harbour and Gooseberry Islands, was listed as a dependency of Bonavista in the Governor's Returns prior to 1765. After 1793, it was listed under Greenspond<sup>6</sup>.

Salvage hosted English fisheries since 1660, but most of the fishermen had either returned to England or established fisheries elsewhere<sup>7</sup>. In 1681, Salvage had a summer population of 67 fishermen<sup>8</sup>. Salvage, like Barrow Harbour and Gooseberry Islands, was listed as a dependency of Bonavista in the Governor's Returns prior to 1765, but after 1793, it was listed under Greenspond<sup>9</sup>. Lester's rooms in Barrow Harbour (#43 and #44) contained fish storage buildings, a rigging loft, etc. where English ships could be repaired and loaded with salt fish cargoes<sup>10</sup>. In the "Accompt of the English Planters in

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<sup>3</sup> Hancock 1989: 125

<sup>4</sup> Macpherson 1977: 107; See also Hancock 1989: 89, 125

<sup>5</sup> Macpherson 1977: 114

<sup>6</sup> Macpherson 1977: 109

<sup>7</sup> Macpherson 1977: 109

<sup>8</sup> Head 1971: 85

<sup>9</sup> Macpherson 1977: 109

<sup>10</sup> Macpherson 1977: 108

Newfoundland” for 1676, Captain Russell listed John Bayly and Christopher Cooke as inhabitants of Barrow Harbour. However, these men were bye-boatkeepers rather than planters. Bayly employed five shallops and twenty-five fishery servants while Cooke maintained only two boats and ten servants. Neither of the two had a wife or children. In the early years, a majority of the fishermen operated seasonal fisheries at Barrow Harbour, and returned to England after the fishing season to return the following spring<sup>11</sup>. Of the thirty-one central Bonavista Bay fishing rooms surveyed, twenty-nine were claimed by planters (93%), and only two by merchants (7%). By 1805, this area was utilized almost exclusively by planter fishermen.

Magistrate Bland was able to collect shore frontage data for only Keels and King’s Cove in central Bonavista Bay (Figures 6.18 and 6.19). Perhaps he found it too difficult to visit the more remote and isolated fishing stations in central Bonavista Bay. Keels and King’s Cove contained continuous shoreline areas that were seldom broken by spaces of void or unusable ground. Five fishing rooms were claimed through inheritance, seven by building, and one by purchase (see Figure 6.24). In Keels, inherited fishing rooms occupied the eastern portion of the harbour while built and purchased rooms were found in the central and eastern portions of the harbour. In King’s Cove, inherited rooms were found in the western portion of the harbour while fishing rooms claimed by building occupied the central and eastern portions. Of the 259 yards of shoreline recorded for Keels, 143 yards were held by inheritance (55%), 42 yards by building (16%), and 74 yards by purchase (29%). King’s Cove contained 585 yards of shore frontage of which 100 yards were claimed through inheritance (17%), and the remaining 485 yards by

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<sup>11</sup> Macpherson 1977: 107-108

building (83%). It appears probable, therefore, that Keels hosted English shore fishermen somewhat earlier than King's Cove. All 585 yards of improved shore frontage in King's Cove was claimed by planters. This area of southern Bonavista Bay was dominated by small-scale planter fisheries, but attracted neither the population nor capital investment characteristic of Bonavista Bay's main fishery harbours.

Southern Bonavista Bay comprised two fishing harbours, and twenty-eight fishing rooms (Figures 6.9 and 6.11), thirteen of which were held by right of inheritance (47%), six by building (21%), and nine by purchase (32%). In most cases, the establishment dates for fishing rooms have not been provided in Bland's register. This is hardly surprising considering that the Bonavista area hosted English fishery activity, and perhaps fishing rooms, since the late-16<sup>th</sup> century. The register does provide dates for rooms #52, #59, #62 and #72, but these properties were founded after 1800. Of the twenty-eight fishing rooms surveyed, twenty-one were claimed by planters (75%), and seven by merchants (25%). The merchant fishing rooms are concentrated in Bonavista Harbour. Planter fishing rooms occupied the central portion of Bonavista Harbour while merchant properties were found on the edges. Bayley's Cove was occupied exclusively by planter fishermen and their dependents.

Of the 1398 yards of improved shoreline recorded for Bonavista Harbour, 754 yards (689m) were held by right of inheritance (54%), 98 yards by building (7%), and 537 yards by purchase (39%). Bayley's Cove shoreline was not interrupted by void spaces meaning that fishing rooms occupied a continuous piece of shoreline. All 483 yards of shoreline in Bayley's Cove was claimed by inheritance (100%). In all, planters claimed 793 yards (58%) and merchants 596 yards (42%). The entire 483 yards of Bayley's Cove

shoreline were held by planters. However, three of these planter fishing rooms claimed by the Abbott family (#45, #49 and #50) had exceptionally large shore frontages, and perhaps accommodated operations of a scale comparable to that of merchant fisheries.

#### **6.4: SUMMARY OF BONA VISTA BAY SETTLEMENT**

As on the English Shore, Bonavista Bay fishing room establishment was ultimately determined in relation to inshore fishing ground distributions, and concerned a finite quantity of shoreline where cod stocks could be accessed regularly using small fishing boats. Most fishermen located in harbours on the peninsular headlands and islands where inshore cod stocks could consistently support more intensive harvesting pressures. Others conducted fisheries in the bay's inner reaches where inshore fishing grounds could only support small-scale fishery pressure. In these areas, however, salt fish revenue was likely augmented using a variety of alternative terrestrial and marine resource exploitation opportunities. Therefore, fishing room establishment involved shoreline located strategically near inshore fishing grounds, but also included locations where a variety of alternative resource assemblages could be exploited in an efficient manner.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Bonavista Bay coasts were patiently converted into fishing rooms which best suited the type and scale of commercial activity mounted. Merchant expansion into Bonavista Bay could not progress until Anglo-French conflicts were settled by 18<sup>th</sup> century treaties, and fishing rights were legally defined between the two competing nations. During the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, English merchant firms turned their attention to the northern frontier; an area for which they had accumulated considerable practical knowledge. They established or purchased fishing rooms in the most lucrative

Bonavista Bay harbours which could best accommodate their fishery interests and complex capital assets that included ship fishery operations, salt fish collection depots, and trade centres. Merchant properties attracted substantial capital investment, and sometimes evolved into regional entrepôts where linkages to overseas trade could be organized locally. A merchant's eminent position within local government, and as a salt fish buyer and regional supplier, placed him in a unique position to assume ownership of the best shore positions available.

The nature of property claim and type of enterprise became instrumental in the social and economic organization of Bonavista Bay fishing harbours, and also affected its regional development. Beginning in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, a majority of fishing rooms were claimed either through right of building or inheritance by small-scale planter fishermen. North of Cape Bonavista, coastal development was undertaken by individuals who made a personal commitment to their fishing rooms, and used their own sweat and toil to transform shoreline into viable commercial properties. Their growing appreciation for regional commercial opportunities enabled independent shore fishery operators to contrive effective strategies which reduced their dependency upon the salt fish industry. Alternative resource exploitation opportunities enabled sedentary fishermen to survive trans-Atlantic trade and supply shipping interruptions that would otherwise have devastated those who depended exclusively upon salt fish revenues. In a sense, fishing room operations prospered or failed according to the versatility of their proprietors.

Long-term fishing room owners secured properties that could be bequeathed to future generations. But retaining ownership of fishing rooms and capital assets under the terms of English property law remained precarious, especially in years of fish scarcity, or

whenever European salt fish market experienced periodic downturns. Fishing rooms maintained as family enterprises infused the capital and manpower necessary for sedentary fishermen to survive difficult periods together. In Bonavista Bay, a number of large family operations contained the shore infrastructure and capital assets of similar size and complexity to that of local merchant firms. In time, these family enterprises would compete for a share of local salt fish production, and some would even develop independent linkages to the overseas supply trade. The growth of family enterprise in Newfoundland took considerable time, but helped to create a singular settlement pattern within fishing harbours that defined the changing social organization of Bonavista Bay's sedentary populations.

## CHAPTER 7.0: CONCLUSION

### THESIS STATEMENT

**The fishing room was a major element in shaping Newfoundland's coastal cultural landscape, and this thesis explores its evolution from a seasonal common property land use system managed by English migratory fishermen, into a form of real property that would substantially define Newfoundland coastal settlement.**



Image 7.1: Newfoundland Fishing Harbour<sup>1</sup>

A study of the Newfoundland fishing room offers a tangible land use expression that unifies marine and bio-physical environments. Adapting the fishing room to Newfoundland's diverse coastal landscape was originally undertaken not by government policy, but by English migratory fishermen to accommodate their overseas fishery activities beginning in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. The fishing room forges a connection between inshore cod fishing ground distributions and shore positions where these

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<sup>1</sup> Photograph e36-31, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador



resources can be most efficiently harvested and dry-processed into a durable salt fish staple (Image 7.1).

The fishing room represents a land use form that was perfected over many years of practical application by English migratory fishermen. Researching the selection criteria underlying the establishment and seasonal allocation of English fishing rooms enables us to better understand the processes employed in preparing the Newfoundland coast for large-scale inshore fishery activity. The fishing room's commercial value was ultimately determined through its proximity to inshore fishing grounds, and the scale of harvesting pressure which these grounds could consistently support. By the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the fishing room offered a practical land use plan for Newfoundland's nascent sedentary population which provided homesteading opportunities that were capitalized by the proceeds of local salt fish production. Maintaining a connection to the transatlantic salt fish and supply trade enabled Newfoundland cod fishermen, their families and dependents to sell locally-produced salt fish through English merchant intermediaries. Salt fish sales generated revenue or credit for Newfoundland fishermen which was used to purchase goods and equipment that could not otherwise be manufactured. In essence, the fishing room offered the Newfoundland sedentary population a framework for settlement along with a local commercial opportunity to actively participate in transatlantic trade. This thesis traces Newfoundland's coastal development from a network of seasonally occupied English migratory fishing stations, through colonial enterprise attempts, to the establishment of permanent settlement.

When English discovery voyages and migratory fisheries ventured out into the North Atlantic during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, West Country populations were well

represented among the ship crews. This historical connection led me to examine the medieval West Country cellar settlement, and the processes underlying its origin and development. Cellar settlements were formed initially to provide English farmers with a seasonal economic opportunity centred upon coastal and marine resource exploitation with which to supplement their yearly cycle of agricultural productivity.

Cellar settlements occupied marginal coastal land of limited agricultural potential that was found outside the scope of manorial control. Poor and landless individuals who failed to find a niche in England's agricultural interior, travelled to the coast to seek economic opportunity. They fashioned dwellings for themselves upon small patches of coastal land using vernacular architectural techniques based upon those which they knew from agricultural structures. Coastal habitation enabled settlers to develop an intimate knowledge of their immediate bio-physical, climatic and marine surroundings and the seasonal abundance cycles for a variety of local terrestrial and marine species. Cellar settlements provided a base from which family enterprises could pursue small-scale economic activities that sometimes involved supplying local markets with locally-cured fish. However, it must be mentioned that English cellar settlement dwellers did not have access to rich inshore cod fishing grounds, nor could their tiny properties accommodate the large-scale commercial land use required in overseas fisheries. Devising effective harvesting and processing strategies for local resource assemblages enabled settlers to glean a livelihood from their natural environments. The skills and life strategies employed in cellar settlement creation also gave the English a cultural foundation that became valuable during North Atlantic commercial expeditions.

To research the evolution of the fishing room, it was necessary to examine the expansion of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century continental European and English migratory fisheries to the New World. In contrast to most continental European migratory fisheries, the English fishery was shore-based, and required that inshore cod landings were cured using a light salt/wind drying method that was completed from shore fishing stations. The English assumed a dominant role in the development of fishing rooms along the English Shore: that portion of Newfoundland's east coast extending from Bonavista Bay and the southern Avalon Peninsula. Initially, fishing rooms offered a seasonal land use form in which specific areas of common property coastline were selected to accommodate the land use requirements for English ship crews engaged in inshore harvesting and fish processing duties. The English government recognized both the migratory fishery's significant economic contribution to the realm and its role as a nursery for trained seamen who could be seconded during times of national crisis.

Since its discovery in 1497, and up until 1583, the Newfoundland coast had not been formally claimed by any European nation. By the late-16<sup>th</sup> century, Newfoundland shores were well-used by English migratory fishermen, but the seasonal nature of these fishery operations prevented fishing rooms from being retained after the inshore fishery period ended. In order to maintain order and profitability in the overseas salt fish trade, English ship captains employed traditional, usufruct rules to determine the process whereby Newfoundland fishing rooms were to be allocated among increasing numbers of migratory fishermen. In effect, inshore fishery land use or occupation was reinvented every year as English migratory fishermen competed to occupy fishing rooms found near Newfoundland's most prolific inshore fishing grounds. So, while the seasonal occupation

of English fishing rooms could change from year to year, the best quality fishing harbours, and the most lucrative shore positions within them, did not change over time

A fishing room's size was a function of the seasonal catch rates achieved by English shore crews, and the area of flake space required to dry fish over a seven to ten day curing period. In this thesis, I have elaborated this idea using generic fishing room diagrams to depict land use for an English ship with a shore crew complement of eight boat crews, and that of a single boat crew operation (see Chapter 3). This elementary form of coastal land use schematization might also be applied to other Canadian iconic landscapes for the purposes of comparative study.

The number of fishing rooms occupied by early English fishermen varied each year according to the number of ships and shore crews transported to the English Shore: a situation that was sensitive to periods of European hostility and to disruptions in overseas trade. To protect their interests at Newfoundland, English ship captains sometimes installed winter caretakers to supervise fishing rooms, and caches of stored supplies and equipment until the following fishing season. In the early migratory fishery, therefore, English fishing room occupancy was largely seasonal, but included a small semi-permanent component.

During the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, colonial ventures introduced planter fishermen to Newfoundland who established English Shore fishing rooms and processed salt fish with the assistance of servants recruited in England (see Chapter 4). For example, George Calvert's colony entailed a substantial capital investment, a large portion of which was expended upon wharves and shore infrastructure for eastern Avalon Peninsula harbours. David Kirke subsequently assumed control of Calvert's defunct colonial enterprise and

English Shore infrastructure, and recruited former colonists and planter fishermen into his enterprise. The emergence of a semi-permanent or permanent English Shore population chagrined migratory fishermen, but also provided them an opportunity to increase voyage profitability. Some English ship captains attempting to maximize profit on the return voyage realized that convincing crew members to remain at Newfoundland after the fishing season ended would increase the space on board for transporting salt fish shipments, and decrease the quantity of supplies necessary to sustain the crew during return voyages. Disembarked migratory fishery labourers sought employment with local planters, and thus contributed to an unregulated and illegal inhabitant population in Newfoundland. Kirke also introduced bye-boat keepers who transported supplies and labour to the Newfoundland coast, and returned salt fish shipments to European markets aboard English fishing ships. Bye-boatkeepers conducted independent fishery operations, but often returned to England after the fishing season.

By the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, the English Shore supported a sedentary population of former colonists, planter fishermen, their families and dependents, and sundry fishery labourers, a majority of whom were drawn directly from the English migratory fishery ranks. Newfoundland's growing sedentary population relied heavily upon transatlantic salt fish trade connections for their livelihoods, and were thus strongly motivated to establish their own independent network of fishing rooms. They could only hope that their doing so would remain unchallenged.

The Western Charter (1634) did not really introduce new English Shore land use regulations, but merely formalized an existing shore space allocation strategy, to be known as the fishing admiralty system, that had been in place for more than forty years.

The charter lent legal weight to the English migratory fishery's claim for fishing rooms that they personally established and seasonally occupied. In effect, the charter preserved the best quality English Shore fishing rooms for the exclusive use of migratory fishermen, and placed fishing room allocation duties under the purview of admirals that were drawn from among their own ranks. In effect, the Western Charter protected England's considerable commercial interests at Newfoundland (see Chapter 4).

The Newfoundland Act (1699) reaffirmed the migratory fishery's right to occupy their own network of English Shore fishing rooms. But the Act also introduced conditional property rights for sedentary fishermen who, since the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, had quietly and illegally possessed their own collection of fishing rooms (Chapter 5). However, the Act stipulated that property rights for sedentary fishermen concerned only those fishing rooms that were continuously utilized for inshore fishery activity. A fishing room that had been abandoned by former claimants for one year was considered void, and the site reverted back to common property status. At this point the fishing room and its extant shore infrastructure became available to new claimants. The Newfoundland Act's introduction in 1699 made it possible for a fishing room to be legally claimed through purchase. Such property regulations, in effect, enabled English merchant firms to accumulate fishing rooms in the most lucrative English Shore fishing harbours, and to legally retain them, even after death, from anywhere in Newfoundland, or England.

The Newfoundland Act's introduction in 1699 made it possible for sedentary fishermen to legally possess fishing rooms to homestead and to raise families on property they could own, bequeath, or sell (see Image 8.6). For sedentary fish producers, the fishing room's land use design, perfected over many years of practical commercial

application by English migratory fishermen, required little in the way of additional infrastructure to support settlement, save perhaps for the addition of more substantial dwelling houses. The fishing room, therefore, became the main unit of settlement that provided property and economic opportunities for independent planters, their families and servants.

The coastal development of Bonavista Bay during the 18<sup>th</sup> century was impacted by the imposition of international treaties drafted to settle periods of Anglo-French conflict which eventually led to the removal of French migratory fishermen from the area, and placed much of the Newfoundland coast directly under English jurisdiction. Our examination of 18<sup>th</sup> century Bonavista Bay concerns the expansion of English fisheries and fishing rooms into the bay: an initiative that was either directly sponsored or supported by English merchants. They were well aware of the best fishery areas on the northeast frontier, and the places where the salt fish industry and supply trade could be conducted most efficiently. English merchants, therefore, possessed the necessary knowledge and capital to accumulate Bonavista Bay fishing rooms either through establishment or purchase- whichever best suited their commercial aspirations.

Magistrate John Bland's Register of Fishing Rooms for Bonavista Bay in 1805-1806 provides sound evidence of how this pattern of commercial land use developed in an area settled relatively recently (see Chapter 6). Using these data, it was possible to explore the nature of fishing room property claims, and attempt to identify some of the differences between fishing rooms claimed by planters and English merchant firms.

Merchant fishing room holdings were largely concentrated within Bonavista Bay's most important and heavily populated harbours; Greenspond and Bonavista. My findings

reveal that while merchants claimed only a small percentage of the fishing rooms in the bay, they controlled a large percentage of the total shore frontage available in the most lucrative harbours. I used Magistrate Bland's fishing room data to fashion schematic diagrams for several harbours to afford a visual and spatial appreciation for 18<sup>th</sup> century Bonavista Bay land use. Figures 6.15 and 6.16 depict the spatial organization of fishing rooms in the Greenspond and Bonavista areas. Superimposing information on the nature of property claim and enterprise type for these fishing rooms allows us to more clearly see how Bonavista Bay land use progressed during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. From the diagrams, it becomes evident that the most powerful fishery enterprises assumed the best shore positions within the most lucrative harbours. This left small operators to fit themselves into the margins.

Canada contains several familiar iconic landscapes- the prairie section, Quebec's seigneurie, Ontario's concession, etc. - many of which are readily apparent on the Canadian landscape today. Initially, these systems were used to organize European migrant populations around environments for which they could contrive practical land use and survival strategies. Most of these systems still function in some capacity today.

The Newfoundland fishing room is an exquisite example of the integration of cultural behaviour with local marine environments. Unlike most Canadian landscapes, the attractiveness of Newfoundland for the English was focussed upon marine instead of terrestrial resources. The fishing room could be adapted to a variety of coastal landscapes, but this form of land use emphasized inshore fishing ground proximity rather than coastal suitability. The fishing room exemplifies the desire to use the sea's resources that was expressed through inshore cod harvesting and dry-processing activities.



Eventually, the fishing room provided commercial space for a domestic economy, and allowed Newfoundland salt fish producers to actively participate in transatlantic trade.

In contrast to Canada's agricultural economies where settlers needed to continually replenish the soil, or fur and forestry economies where the replacement generation of commercial resources often required considerable time, inshore cod fishing grounds were naturally replenished each year as cod migrated inshore from their nurseries on the Grand Banks. For early English fishermen, inshore cod stocks represented a self-perpetuating commercial supply that could not normally be over-exploited using small boats and rudimentary hook-and-line technology. The fishing room's creation involved the exploitation of local forest resources to construct shore fishery infrastructure: initially a process of seasonal common property land use that actually prepared additional shore space for more fishing rooms and enterprise. English fishermen adopted a system of seasonal land allocation that defined a tangible form for the Newfoundland fishing room, and organized how these commercial spaces were to be most conveniently and profitably shared. All British law applied to Newfoundland in the early years was expressed in relation to the fishing room and access to marine resources, and not land.

The fishing room's introduction to the Newfoundland coast represents an organic process that originated with seasonal land use requirements in the early English fishery. Initially, the fishing room provided a practical template for coastal land use that was defined in relation to inshore cod harvesting and dry-processing activities of varying commercial scale. The Newfoundland Act's introduction in 1699, in a sense, merely recognized an existing land use system, but also included regulations to differentiate between fishing rooms that were occupied seasonally by English migratory fishermen,

and those that were established and maintained by inhabitant fishermen. The latter form of fishing room occupancy represented a form of real property that could be retained or disposed of under the terms of English Common Law. Thereafter, the fishing room became the core of the only recognized private property type in Newfoundland, and provided an effective land use strategy for both large-scale commercial fishery operations as well as small sedentary fishery entrepreneurs. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, fishing rooms served as regional headquarters for English mercantile firms and as bases for household economies operated by inhabitant fishermen and their dependents<sup>2</sup>. These small-scale operations survived upon inshore fishery revenues which, in effect, aligned Newfoundland fishing community prosperity with inshore cod availability, and the changing fortunes of the transatlantic salt fish and supply trades.

. . . prior to 1950 the fishery was, by and large, conducted in shallow inshore waters with essentially passive gear. The availability of fish to that gear was dependent upon the constancy of recurring patterns of [cod] migrations. Prolonged periods of scarcity may therefore have resulted from either periods when oceanographic conditions inhibited normal migration patterns or may have reflected previously successive years of poor year-class survival.<sup>3</sup>

Settlement based exclusively upon the fishing room and inshore fishery effectively scattered the Newfoundland population among a collection of small coastal communities. In this environment, social interactions were most easily accomplished by boat rather than overland. This settlement pattern emphasized a form of “inter-bay” communication between Newfoundland communities which differed markedly from communities

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<sup>2</sup> Ommer :2007: 56

<sup>3</sup> Harris 1993: 2

connected by roads. In Newfoundland's large and small bays and coves, the fishing room continued to be the typical settlement morphology through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

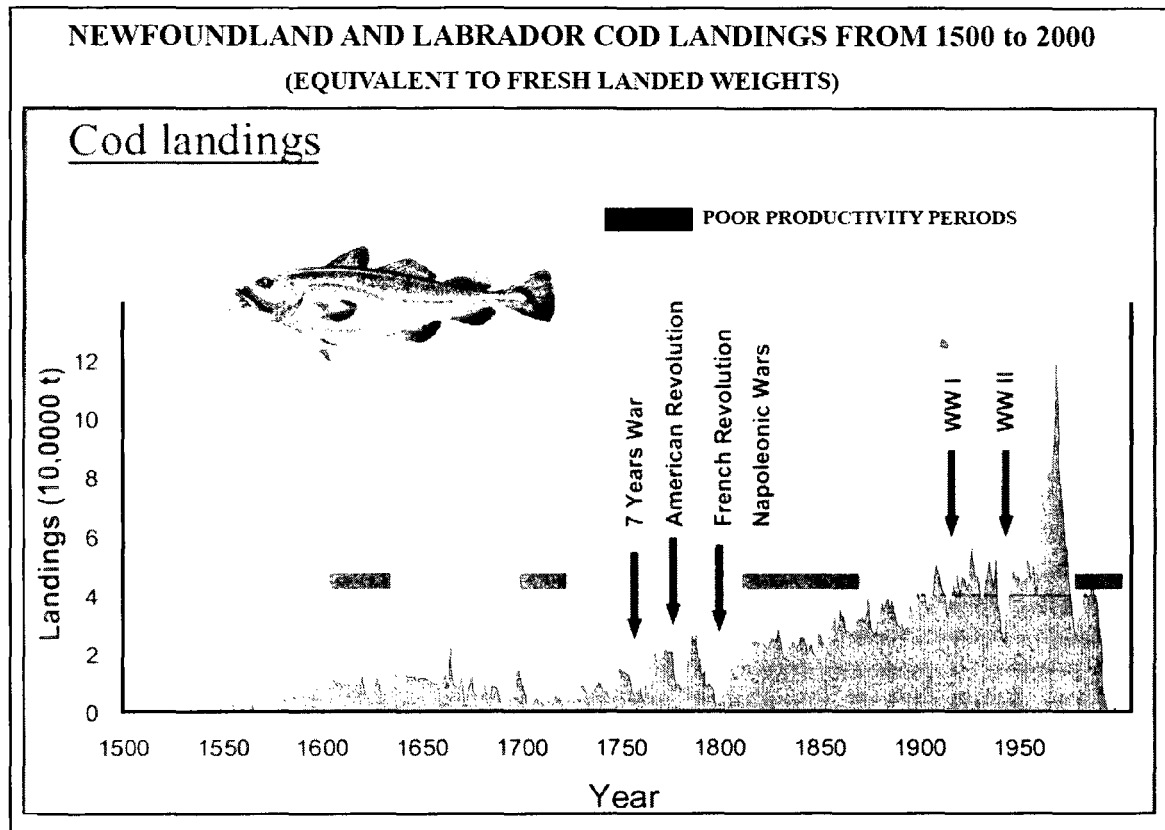


Figure 7.3: Newfoundland and Labrador Cod Landings, 1500-2000<sup>4</sup>

**“In total, approximately 100 million [tons] of cod have been take from Newfoundland waters since 1500. It is of great significance that approximately one half of the 100 million [tons] was taken between 1500 and 1900, the other half between 1900 and 1993.”<sup>5</sup>**

Figure 7.3 places Newfoundland's inshore cod landings within the historical record.

Notice the error in describing the calculation of cod landings on the graph's "y" axis (10,0000 t). This egregious oversight epitomizes problems encountered devising effective

<sup>4</sup> Rose, George A., "Fisheries Resources and Science in Newfoundland and Labrador: An Independent Assessment", Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada, vol. 3, St. John's: Queens Printer, 2003

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 11

management over our common property fisheries resources. Perhaps we have been far too careless in our perceptions of a resource that has been so vitally important to Newfoundland's cultural heritage. The diagram clearly identifies a pattern of rapidly increasing exploitation of cod resources, but leaves us unaware of just how much fresh cod (10, 0000 tons or 100,000 tons?) is represented for each of the 450 years of cod landings data displayed. And just how many fishermen and Newfoundland communities were sustained by the estimated 100 million tons of cod landed between 1500 and 1900? Perhaps accurate figures have finally become beside the point.

Prior to 1900, we can assume that a vast majority of inshore cod landings were harvested using much the same rudimentary technology as was discussed in this thesis, and that most inshore cod landings were dry-processed into salt fish for export. But the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries introduced significant innovation to the traditional inshore cod fishery, and challenged the economic well-being of numerous Newfoundland fishing communities. The introduction of the diesel engine in the 1940s, for example, radically increased the distances which could be travelled from these fishing communities and inshore cod stocks. Newfoundland's entry into Confederation in 1949 placed control of the island and its marine resources into Canadian hands. In the 1950s and 1960s, Newfoundland inshore fishery declines corresponded to the arrival of European-based trawlers operating over the Grand Banks. Perhaps the Newfoundland Resettlement program of this time offers a prime example of how fishery downturns were handled governmentally. Improved harvesting technology, a steadily increasing demand for fresh frozen fish exports effectively challenged Newfoundland salt fish exports<sup>6</sup>. The resulting

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<sup>6</sup> See Alexander, 1977

diversification of the Newfoundland inshore fishery accommodated the spatial distributions, harvesting techniques, and processing methods for a number of new commercial species such as redfish, haddock, flounder, etc.<sup>7</sup>. The Newfoundland fishery was most decidedly being managed for profit. This strategy brought large fish processing plants and commercial wharves to select Newfoundland harbours. Deep-sea trawler fishermen, from several nations including Canada experienced “excessively high catches” while offshore and inshore *fixed gear* fishermen witnessed overall declines in catch rate and income<sup>8</sup>.

More than one quarter of the total population of the Atlantic provinces live in small fishing communities. The Task Force identified a total of 1339 small fishing communities in Newfoundland and the Maritimes. At least half these communities have essentially single sector economies, with fishing and processing plant employment occupying 30 percent or more of the labour force.<sup>9</sup>

In 1982, the Federal Government of Canada released a new policy for the Atlantic fisheries. The report stated that the Atlantic fishery crisis of 1982 concerned,

. . . “three specific roots”: the “over-extension, chiefly over-capitalization, by fishermen and [fish] processors, aided and abetted by both levels of government, and whose effects were made much worse by general economic reverses; resistance to change and adjustment”; and the “current policies of the fishery- federal, provincial and internal to the industry itself- which inhibits change, shelters the less efficient, and leads participants to pick sides and fight for turf.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Rose 2003: 11

<sup>8</sup> “In the modern era, with the advent of deep-sea trawler technology, peak landings in excess of 800,000 tonnes were recorded in 1968 but this bumper harvest was followed by a crash to landings of less than 150,000 tonnes in 1978.” Harris 1993: 2

<sup>9</sup> Navigating Troubled Waters 1982: 23

<sup>10</sup> Navigating Troubled Waters 1992

While the report examines socio-economic conditions in the Atlantic Provinces, its recommendations seem to emphasize fishery profitability over the socio-economic conditions presently impacting Newfoundland fishing communities.

In the late-20<sup>th</sup> century, the Newfoundland inshore fishery effort included fleets of “longliners, gillnetters, and laterally small otter trawlers that have steadily moved the ‘inshore’ fishery further and further offshore”<sup>11</sup>. Road construction has connected fishery communities to regional transportation networks that presently span the island. All of these factors have tended to regionalize Newfoundland’s population, and to draw them ever farther from the small outport community. Educational opportunities for younger generations enable them to explore careers outside the fishery, and far-removed from isolated coastal villages. Newfoundland youth who experience the steady decline of their fishing communities often feel uncertain of their future,

. . . in a way that has implications for their emotional and mental health. Discussions about what they think their future may be reveal a huge tension: a strong sense of attachment to their community and its location and, for many, a sense of grief and loss because they feel relatively powerless to steer the direction their communities might take in the future.<sup>12</sup>

Federal policy concerning the Atlantic fishery has involved “the increasing concentration of power at a national level”, which allowed the large-scale harvesting of offshore resources near Newfoundland: an initiative conducted “at the expense,

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<sup>11</sup> Harris 1993: 2

<sup>12</sup> Ommer 2007: 317-319

ultimately, of the livelihood of local [fishing] communities”<sup>13</sup>. Rosemary Ommer cautions us that,

It remains to be seen, however, how communities have managed to endure, given that resilience in policy-making has been focused on the sustainability of industrial concerns rather than sustainable communities, stewardship, and resources recovery.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly, governmental policy appears to be focussed more on monetary gains than preserving tradition lifestyle.

A final severe blow to Newfoundland fishing communities has been the Cod Moratorium, declared in 1992 which is still in effect today. The result of the moratorium is that many fishing rooms are falling steadily into decay and disrepair, and will not always be rejuvenated. In a few short generations, not only had the Newfoundland fishing harbour failed to provide local employment for its residents, but the traditional knowledge necessary to recreate viable fishing rooms and communities wither as fishermen grow old. And now, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the fishing room is only a vestigial trace, and the Newfoundland fishing community along with its traditions and heritage could not possibly survive intact under these extraordinary circumstances.

In 2003, the Newfoundland government released a Royal Commission report to explore our place in Canada<sup>15</sup>. This compilation of scholarly studies offers a detailed account of Newfoundland’s history, and its prospects for the future. Gerard Blackmore’s article states,

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<sup>13</sup> Ommer 2007: 66-67

<sup>14</sup> Ommer 2007: 179

<sup>15</sup> Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada ; 2003

We have come to an unspoken understanding of our sea with its riches and its perils- a sea that served us (and which we served) from the very day we began coming here five centuries ago . . . Consequently, we have difficulty in understanding how that ocean could become the domain and reserve of people thousands of miles away, people whose faces and minds are free of salt and scars, whose hands never dip into the North Atlantic . . . and then inform us in antiseptic letters just how long we can stay out there on that water, and when we must come in before the last, dark night falls.<sup>16</sup>

The gradual failure of northern cod has been disastrous for Newfoundland fishing communities but, ironically, the fishing room has subsequently achieved iconic status. It now generates income as part of Newfoundland tourism. The fishing room has finally achieved recognition as a culturally significant entity to be preserved and honoured as a legacy of Newfoundland's traditional heritage. The federal Fisheries Heritage Preservation Program (FHPP) encourages the "restoration of heritage features using traditional materials [and skills]" by supporting either individual or community projects (see Image 7.3). Several federal and provincial government programs concerning the Newfoundland fishing room can presently be viewed on-line<sup>17</sup>. The fishing room, embedded so naturally within the rugged coastal landscape, serves as a basic and meaningful Newfoundland cultural element, and is therefore well-deserving of our concerted efforts in its preservation.

The flakes, stages, stores and sheds that dot our coastline tell the story of a way of life that has sustained generations of fishing families in Newfoundland and Labrador. With the decline of the traditional cod fishery, many of these buildings have been lost. However, many of the buildings and structures that remain can be given a new lease on life [for tourism, and not for fishing].<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Blackmore 2003: 317

<sup>17</sup> The Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador website ([www.heritagefoundation.ca](http://www.heritagefoundation.ca)), the Canadian Centre for Architecture ([www.cca.gc.ca](http://www.cca.gc.ca)), and Newfoundland's Grand Banks ([www.ngb.chebucto.org](http://www.ngb.chebucto.org)) are websites that contain images and information on the fishing rooms.

<sup>18</sup> Conserving Our Fisheries Heritage 2007: 1



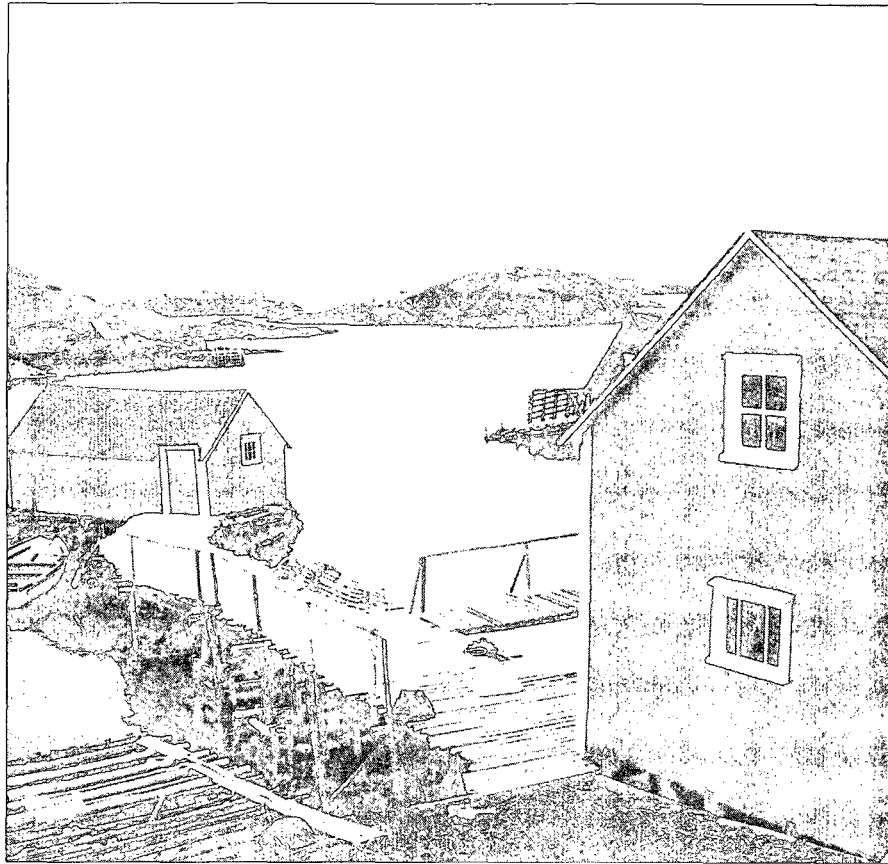


Image 7.3: The Peckford Stage and Walkway, Change Islands, Notre Dame Bay<sup>19</sup>

And now there is talk of closing down rural communities, or letting them wither away, deprived of their services, infrastructure, and youth. At the same time, footloose industrial fleets pillage the seas- and we cannot afford sufficient numbers of coast guard vessels to ensure that the hard-won two-hundred mile [fishery] limit is observed. Who will steward the seas in the inshore communities are gone? Where will the experiments in co-management and marine protected areas (MPAs) and cooperative living occur if they are gone? Urban Canada dare not forget that it depends on its hinterland, on the resources that sustain it and that need stewardship. Governments at the federal and provincial level seek revenues for all- but “all” often means urban-industrial cores and industrial businesses. The rural producer communities of this country do not need urban-level wages, but they [do] need the opportunity to provide sustenance for themselves so that they may provide it for the nation. We ignore, reject, or dismiss them at our peril.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Conserving Our Fisheries Heritage 2007: Cover Photo

<sup>20</sup> Ommer 2007: 446

## APPENDICES

Table 7.1: Transcription of Bonavista Bay Fishing Room Registry, 1805-1806

ROOM #	ROOM NAME	WHERE SITUATED	CLAIMANT	NATURE OF THE CLAIM	OCCUPANT	IN WHAT MANNER HELD	CONS.	DATE OF ENTRY	EXTENT OF THE ROOM.
1	George Barber's Room	On Pond Island, Et. end of the harbour of Greenspond	Geo. Barber Greenspond	Originally built by claimant's family	Geo. Barber, Greensp <sup>d</sup>	Inheritance		27 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has one stage. It is situated in an angle, two sides of which are wash'd by the sea, and from high water mark on the E <sup>t</sup> side it extends nearly NW <sup>t</sup> by compass, thirty six yards, and is bounded on this line by room No. 2
2	Jos <sup>h</sup> Barber's Room	Do.	Jos <sup>h</sup> Barber, Pond	Originally built by the claimant's family	Jos <sup>h</sup> Barber, Pond	Inheritance		27 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash SE <sup>t</sup> & NW <sup>t</sup> , and is bounded by room No. 1 to the SE <sup>t</sup> and by room No. 3 to the NW <sup>t</sup> , being twenty yards wide.
3	Mary Hutchin's Room	Do.	Mary Hutchins, Pond	Originally built by the claimant's family	Mary Hutchins, Pond	Inheritance		27 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has one stage, extends SE <sup>t</sup> & NW <sup>t</sup> fifty-six yards along the landwash, is bounded on the SE <sup>t</sup> by room No. 2 and on the NW <sup>t</sup> by room No. 4.
4	Philip Black's Room	Do.	Phil. Black, Pond	Purchased, 1793	P. Black, Pond	In right of purchase		27 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has one stage, extends forty-eight yards SE <sup>t</sup> & NW <sup>t</sup> along the landwash, is bounded on the SE <sup>t</sup> by room No. 3 and on the NW <sup>t</sup> by room No. 5.
5	Lester's Lower Room	Do.	Benjamin Lester & Co., Poole	Purchased 1782	B. Lester & Co., Pool	In right of purchase		27 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has three stages and extends along the landwash two hundred and seventy eight yards SE <sup>t</sup> & NW <sup>t</sup> , bounded on the SE by room No. 4, and on the NW <sup>t</sup> by room No. 6. Two parallel lines running inland from the extremes of the landwash

									line enclose the stores, houses, flakes, and the whole is bounded backwards by the open country, an advantage equally pofsefsed by every room on the North side of Pond Harbour.
6	Read's Room	On Pond Is <sup>ld</sup> middle of the harbour of Greenspond	Sleat & Read, Pond	Purchased 1802	Sleat & Read, Pond	In right of purchase		27 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has three stages, extends along the landwash one hundred and ninety-one yards SE <sup>t</sup> & NW <sup>t</sup> , comprises all its buildings between two parallel lines running inland from the extremes of the landwash line, is bounded on the SE <sup>t</sup> by room No. 5, and on the NW <sup>t</sup> by room No. 7.
7	Barry's Room	Do.	Edw <sup>d</sup> . Barry & Benj <sup>n</sup> Johnson, Pond	Purchased, 1799	Barry & Johnson, Pond	In right of purchase		27 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash one hundred and twenty yards SE <sup>t</sup> & NW <sup>t</sup> , is bounded on the SE <sup>t</sup> by roon No. 6 and on the NW <sup>t</sup> by room No. 8, and includes all its erections between parallel lines running inland from the extremes of the landwash line.
8	Attwood's Room	On Pond Island at end of Pond Harbour	Esau Attwood, Pond	Originally built by the claimant, 27 years	Esau Attwood, Pond	In right of original pofsefsion		27 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash SE <sup>t</sup> & NW <sup>t</sup> one hundred and twenty yards, is bounded on the SE <sup>t</sup> by room No. 7 and on the NW <sup>t</sup> by room No. 9, and includes all its erections between two parallel lines running inland from the extremes of the landwash line.
9	Saunder's Room	Do.	Rob <sup>t</sup> . Saunders, Pond	Purchased 17 years	Rob <sup>t</sup> . Saunders, Pond	In right of purchase		27 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash SE <sup>t</sup> & NW <sup>t</sup> one hundred and twenty-eight yards, is bounded on the SE <sup>t</sup> by room No. 8,

									and on the by room No. 10, and includes all its erections between two parallel lines running inland from the extremes of the landwash line.
10	Burly's Room	Pond Island, W <sup>t</sup> end of Greenspond harbour	David Burly Sen <sup>r</sup> . Greenspond	Originally built by claimant, 30 years	David Burly Sen <sup>r</sup> . Greenspond	In right of original pofsefsion		28 <sup>th</sup> July 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash SE <sup>t</sup> & NW <sup>t</sup> one hundred and twenty yards, bounded on the SE <sup>t</sup> by room No. 9, and on the NW <sup>t</sup> by room No. 11, and includes all its erections between parallel lines running inland from the extremes of the landwash line.
11	McCarthy's Room	Do.	John McCarthy, Greenspond	Originally built by the claimant, 1801	John McCarthy, Greenspond	In right of original possession		28 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has one stage, which stands within the boundary of room No. 12. It extends along the landwash SE <sup>t</sup> & NW <sup>t</sup> nineteen yards, bounded on the SE <sup>t</sup> by room No. 10, and on the NW <sup>t</sup> by the east side of its own stage, and includes its erections between parallel lines running inland from the extremes of the landwash line.
12	Windsor's Room	Do.	John Windsor, Greenspond	Originally built by the claimant, 1799	John Windsor, Greenspond	In right of original possession		28 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash SE <sup>t</sup> & NW <sup>t</sup> fifty-seven yards, is bounded on the SE <sup>t</sup> by the east side of the stage of room No. 11, and on the NW <sup>t</sup> by room No. 13, and includes all its erections between parallel lines running inland from the extremes of the landwash line.
13	Strotten's Room	Pond Island, W <sup>t</sup> end of the harbour of	Tho <sup>s</sup> Strotten, Greenspond	Originally built by the claimant,	Thos Strotten, Greenspond	In right of original possession		28 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has one stage which stands within the boundary of room No. 12- it extends along the landwash E <sup>t</sup> & W <sup>t</sup> thirty-five yards,

		Greenspond		1802					bounded on the E <sup>t</sup> by room No. 12, and on the W <sup>t</sup> by unoccupied ground.
14	Manuel's Room	Do.	W <sup>m</sup> . Manuel, Twillingate	Originally built by claimant's family, 50 years	Nicholas Kennedy, Greenspond	By lease	£4 Per Annum	28 <sup>th</sup> July 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash line NNW <sup>t</sup> & SSE <sup>t</sup> twenty yards, bounded on the SE <sup>t</sup> by room No. 15 and by its own stage and unoccupied ground on the NW <sup>t</sup> .
15	Lester's Upper Room	Do.	B. Lester & Co., Poole	Purchased, 20 years	B. Lester & Co., Poole	In right of purchase		28 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has two stages, extends along the landwash NNW <sup>t</sup> & SSE <sup>t</sup> one hundred yards, bounded on the NW <sup>t</sup> by room No. 14 and by the sea to the SE <sup>t</sup> .
16	White's Room	SW <sup>t</sup> side, on the middle part of Greenspond harbour	John White & Edward Pond, Greenspond	Originally built by the claimants, 1804	John White & Edward Pond, Greenspond	In right of original pofsefsion		28 <sup>th</sup> July 1805	This room has one stage, it extends E <sup>t</sup> & W <sup>t</sup> fifty yards and is bounded on all sides by rocks and unoccupied ground.
17	Kean's Room	Ship Island, Greenspond Harbour	Cap <sup>t</sup> Kean Esq., Great Britain	Originally built by Kean's family, 80 years	Thom <sup>s</sup> Street, Pool	By lease		28 <sup>th</sup> July 1805	This room has one stage- a compass line extending from a post on the North side of the stage door on the bank SSW <sup>t b</sup> S <sup>th</sup> thirty yards, then S <sup>b</sup> W <sup>t</sup> eighty-seven yards, then W <sup>t b</sup> S <sup>th</sup> twenty yards to high water mark on the W <sup>t</sup> side of Ship Island completely encloses this room.
18	Green's Room	Ship Island, Greenspond	Tho <sup>s</sup> Green, Pond	Purchased, two years	Thos Green, Pond	In right of purchase		28 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash WSW <sup>t</sup> and ENE <sup>t</sup> sixty yards, is bounded on the North side by unoccupied ground, and on the South by the sea.
19	Crocker's Room	Little Grout's Island	Wm. Crocker, Greenspond	Built by the claimant,	Wm. Crocker, Pond	In right of original possession		29 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has one stage, and is bounded on all sides by the sea.

				1802					
20	Ben Carter's Room	Ship Island, Greenspond	Benj <sup>n</sup> . & Joseph Carter, Pond	Originally built by the claimant's family, 80 years	Benj <sup>n</sup> . & Jos <sup>h</sup> . Carter, Pond	In right of inheritance		29 <sup>th</sup> July 1805	This room has one stage- a compass line extending from a rock in the landwash on the North side of the stage NW <sup>t b</sup> W <sup>t</sup> eighty-two yards, then SW <sup>t b</sup> S <sup>th</sup> sixty yards, Then S <sup>b</sup> W <sup>t</sup> forty yards to high water mark on the South side of the island completely encloses this room.
21	Burton's Room	Do.	Thom <sup>s</sup> Street, Pool	Purchased from the original proprietor	Tho <sup>s</sup> Street, Pool	In right of purchase		29 <sup>th</sup> July 1805	This room has one stage- a compass line extending from a post on the North side of the stage door of Kean's room SSW <sup>t b</sup> W <sup>t</sup> thirty yards, then S <sup>t b</sup> W <sup>t</sup> eighty-seven yards, then W <sup>t b</sup> S <sup>th</sup> twenty yards to the high water mark that bounds Kean's room on the W <sup>t</sup> side of the island, then E <sup>t b</sup> N <sup>th</sup> eighty yards, then ENE <sup>t</sup> forty yards then E <sup>t b</sup> N <sup>th</sup> thirteen yards, then N <sup>th b</sup> W <sup>t</sup> forty yards, then N <sup>th b</sup> E <sup>t</sup> thirty-six yards to the water side completely encloses this room, and marks the boundary between it and rooms No. 17 and 22.
22	Sam <sup>l</sup> White's Room	East side of Ship Island, Greenspond	Sam <sup>l</sup> . Rolls, Pond	By will of Sam <sup>l</sup> White	B. Lester & Co., Pool	By lease		29 <sup>th</sup> July, 1805	This room has two stages- a compass line extending from a rock in the landwash adjoining Burtons's Room S <sup>t b</sup> W <sup>t</sup> thirty-six yards, then S <sup>t b</sup> E <sup>t</sup> forty yards, then W <sup>t b</sup> S <sup>th</sup> sixty yards to the corner of Tho <sup>s</sup> Green's store, then ESE <sup>t</sup> twenty yards, then SE <sup>t b</sup> E <sup>t</sup> one hundred and twenty yards to the rock on the North side of Carter's stage, completely encloses this room.

23	Pig Island Room	Pig Island, Pond	John Feltham & Sam <sup>l</sup> Skiffington. Greenspond	Built by the claimants, 1802	Feltham & Skiffington Pond	In right of original pofsefsion		29 <sup>th</sup> July 1805	This room has one stage and is bounded on all sides by the sea. It has not extent sufficient to admit a greater quantity of fish than may be caught by one skiff.
24	Burry's Room	W <sup>t</sup> . Side of Newell's Island	Tho <sup>s</sup> . Burry & Co., Pond	Built by claimant's father	Tho <sup>s</sup> . Burry & Co., Pond	In right of original pofsefsion		29 <sup>th</sup> July 1805	This room has one stage and occupies an extent along the landwash of one hundred yards in the direction of E <sup>t</sup> <sup>b</sup> N <sup>th</sup> by compass. It is bounded on the North by ground too much exposed to the sea for a safe fishery, and on the South by a considerable extent of unoccupied ground where a large room might be built. The occupants claim the void space and prevent the extension of the fishery thereupon.
25	Brown's Room	W <sup>t</sup> . Side of Newell's Island, Greenspond	W <sup>m</sup> . Brown, his brothers & sister, Bonavista	Inherited from their father	John Ducey, Greenspond	By lease	£4 Per Annum	29 <sup>th</sup> July 1805	This room has one stage. The flakes and buildings are bounded on the North by Parker's room, and on the South by a void space unfit for the fishery, being too much exposed to the sea.
26	Avery's Room	NE <sup>t</sup> corner of Keels	Tho <sup>s</sup> Walley, Keels	Purchased last year from Avery, the original possessor	Thos Walley, Keels	In right of purchase		2 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash seventy-four yards NE <sup>t</sup> <sup>b</sup> N <sup>th</sup> & SW <sup>t</sup> <sup>b</sup> S <sup>th</sup> by compass, bounded on the NE <sup>t</sup> by unoccupied ground, and on the SW <sup>t</sup> by room No. 27.
27	Turner's Room	Keels	W <sup>m</sup> . Turner, Keels	Originally built by the proprietor 40 years	W <sup>m</sup> . Turner, Keels	In right of original possession		2 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash NE <sup>t</sup> & SW <sup>t</sup> forty-two yards, bounded on the NE <sup>t</sup> by room 26, and on the SW <sup>t</sup> by a void space where a fishing room

				ago					formerly stood.
28	Hobb's Room	Do.	Abra <sup>m</sup> Hobbs, Keels	Originally built by the claimant's family	A. Hobbs, Keels	In right of inheritance		2 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash forty-three yards NE <sup>t</sup> & SW <sup>t</sup> , bounded on the North by a void space, formerly occupied by a fishery, and on the SW <sup>t</sup> by room No. 29.
29	Elliott's Room	Keels	Cha <sup>s</sup> Elliott, Keels	Originally built by the claimant's family	Cha <sup>s</sup> Elliott, Keels	In right of inheritance		2 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash thirty-seven yards NE <sup>t</sup> & SW <sup>t</sup> , bounded on the NE <sup>t</sup> by room No. 28, and on the SW <sup>t</sup> by room No. 30.
30	Fitzgerald's Room	Do.	Edw <sup>d</sup> Fitzgerald, Keels	Originally built by claimant's family	Edw <sup>d</sup> Fitzgerald, Keels	In right of inheritance		2 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash sixty-three yards NE <sup>t</sup> & SW <sup>t</sup> , bounded on the NE <sup>t</sup> by room No. 29, and on the SW <sup>t</sup> by a hill not proper for the fishery.
31	Bullock's Room	Turkish Shore, Keels	Ja <sup>s</sup> . Atwood, Open Hole	Originally built by the family of claimant's wife	Ja <sup>s</sup> . Brian, Keels	Tenant at will	£50 Per Annum	2 <sup>d</sup> . Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has one stage and has an insular situation by occupying the entire beach in the direction of SE <sup>t</sup> and NW <sup>t</sup> .
32	Ray's Room	King's Cove	Ja <sup>s</sup> Ray, King's Cove	Built by the claimant, 1800	Jas Ray, King's Cove	In right of building and possession		3 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash one hundred yards E <sup>t</sup> and W <sup>t</sup> , bounded on the E <sup>t</sup> by unoccupied ground not calculated for extension of the fishery, and on the W <sup>t</sup> by room No. 33.
33	Welsh's Room	King's Cove	Thos Welch, King's Cove	Built by the claimant, 1800	Tho <sup>s</sup> Welch, King's Cove	In right of building and possession		3 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends one hundred yards along the landwash E <sup>t</sup> and W <sup>t</sup> , bounded on the E <sup>t</sup> by room No. 32, and on the W <sup>t</sup> by unoccupied ground
34	Sullivan's Room	Do. [King's Cove]	Jas. Sullivan, King's Cove	Clear <sup>rd</sup> & built by	Ja <sup>s</sup> . Sullivan, King's Cove	In right of original		3 <sup>d</sup> . Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash one hundred



				claimant 20 years		possession			yards E <sup>t</sup> and W <sup>t</sup> , bounded on both sides by unoccupied ground.
35	Dick's Room	Do.	W <sup>m</sup> Dick, King's Cove	Built by the claimant, 1802	W <sup>m</sup> Dick, King's Cove	In right of building and possession		3 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash E <sup>t</sup> and W <sup>t</sup> fifty yards, bounded on the E <sup>t</sup> by unoccupied ground, and on the W <sup>t</sup> by room No. 36.
36	Brown & Hancock's Room	Do.	W <sup>m</sup> Brown & Henry Hancock, King's Cove	Built by the claimants, 1804	W <sup>m</sup> Brown & Henry Hancock, King's Cove	In right of building and possession		3 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash E <sup>t</sup> and W <sup>t</sup> sixty-five yards, bounded on the E <sup>t</sup> by room No. 35, and on the W <sup>t</sup> by room No. 37.
37	Hancock's Room	Do.	Rich <sup>d</sup> Hancock, King's Cove	Originally built by the claimant's family	Rich <sup>d</sup> Hancock, King's Cove	In right of inheritance		3 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash E <sup>t</sup> and W <sup>t</sup> seventy yards to a pond, then S <sup>th</sup> seventy yards along the harbour beach, bounded on the E <sup>t</sup> by room No. 36, and on the W <sup>t</sup> by a pond, and on the S <sup>th</sup> by Edward Green's Flake
38	Green's Flake	On the beach, King's Cove	Edw <sup>d</sup> . Green & Rich <sup>d</sup> . Hancock, King's Cove	Built by the claimants, 1804	E <sup>d</sup> . Green & R <sup>d</sup> . Hancock, King's Cove	In right of building and possession		3 <sup>d</sup> . Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	A single flake extending along the landwash beach N <sup>th</sup> . and S <sup>th</sup> . seventy yards, constitutes the whole of the annex'd number. It is built for curing fish brought from the North shore, is bounded on the No. by room No. 37 and on the S <sup>th</sup> by room No. 39
39	Aylward's Room	Do.	Ja <sup>s</sup> . Aylward & W <sup>m</sup> . Aylward, King's Cove	Originally built by the claimant's family	Ja <sup>s</sup> . & W <sup>m</sup> . Aylward, King's Cove	In right of inheritance		3 <sup>d</sup> . Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has one stage, extends N <sup>th</sup> and S <sup>th</sup> thirty yards, then E <sup>t</sup> and W <sup>t</sup> to any distance the proprietor chooses. It is bounded on the N <sup>th</sup> by Green's Flake, on the S <sup>th</sup> by room No. 40, and on the W <sup>t</sup> by woods.
40	Ryan's	Do.	Pat <sup>k</sup> . Ryan,	Built by	Pat <sup>k</sup> . Ryan,	In right of		3 <sup>d</sup> . Aug <sup>t</sup> .	This room has one stage. It is

	Room		King's Cove	the claimant after having been many years vacated by a former proprietor	King's Cove	building and pofsefsion		1805	situated upon broken ground on a hill, bounded on the N <sup>th</sup> by room No. 39, on the SE <sup>t</sup> by room No. 41, and on the SW <sup>t</sup> by the open country.
41	Green's Room	King's Cove South side	Edw <sup>d</sup> Green, King's Cove	Built by the claimant	Ed <sup>d</sup> Green, King's Cove	In right of original possession		3 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, stands upon hilly and broken ground, is bounded on the NW <sup>t</sup> by room No. 40, and on the SE <sup>t</sup> by inaccessible rocks which admit no extension of the fishery.
42	Stockly's Room	Stockly's Cove, Barrow Harbour	Jos <sup>h</sup> . Lane, Barrow Harbour	Inherited from the original proprietor	Jos. Lane, Barrow Harbour	In right of inheritance		6 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the entire of a small beach, bounded on each side by unoccupied and hilly ground.
43	Lester's Room	Do.	B. Lester & Co., Pool	Built by the claimant, 1805	B. Lester & Co., Pool	In right of building and pofsefsion		6 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has one stage with a capacious store house for fish. It is bounded on all sides by inaccessible rocks, and was built to accommodate vefsels sent hither to load.
44	Lester's Old Store	Do.	B. Lester & Co., Pool	Built by the claimant	B. Lester & Co., Pool	In right of building and pofsefsion		6 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	A storehouse with a rigging loft built to accommodate vefsels sent hither to load and refit constitutes the whole of the annex'd number.
45	John Abbott's	Bayly's Cove,	John Abbott, Bonavista	Originally built by	J. Abbott, Bonavista	In right of inheritance		9 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash N <sup>th</sup> W and S <sup>th</sup> b

	Room	Bonavista		the claimant's family					Et one hundred and forty-six yards, and from the S <sup>th</sup> extremity of this line E <sup>t</sup> b S <sup>th</sup> twenty –seven yards, then N <sup>th</sup> b E <sup>t</sup> to any extent the proprietor chooses. It is bounded on the N <sup>th</sup> by unoccupied ground unfit for a fishery, on the S <sup>th</sup> by the stage of room No. 46, and on the E <sup>t</sup> by the same room.
46	Steph <sup>n</sup> Lander's Room	Bayly's Cove, Bonavista	Steph <sup>n</sup> Lander, Bonavista	Built by the claimant's family	Steph <sup>n</sup> Lander, Bonavista	In right of inheritance		9 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has one stage which stands to the W <sup>t</sup> of John Abbott's stage. From the W <sup>t</sup> corner of Abbott's stage it extends along the landwash E <sup>t</sup> b S <sup>th</sup> sixty-three yards, then N <sup>th</sup> to any extent. From the E <sup>t</sup> corner of Abbott's stage it extends N <sup>th</sup> b E <sup>t</sup> upon which line it is bounded by Abbott's new house and flake. On the W <sup>t</sup> it is bounded by room No. 45 and on the E <sup>t</sup> by room No. 47 and a garden belonging to room No. 48.
47	Pladwells Room	Do.	Hannah Pladwell, Bonavista	Left by the claimant's husb <sup>d</sup>	W <sup>m</sup> Pladwell, Bonavista	By permission from Hannah Pladwell		9 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage- extends along the landwash E <sup>t</sup> b S <sup>th</sup> and W <sup>t</sup> b N <sup>th</sup> eight yards and the flake is erected behind the room No. 48. It is bounded on the W <sup>t</sup> by room No. 46, and on the E <sup>t</sup> by room No. 48.
48	Mesh's Room	Do.	Rach <sup>l</sup> Mesh, Bonavista	Left by the claimant's husb <sup>d</sup>	Moses Keels & Rich <sup>d</sup> Mesh, Bonavista	Rented from the claimant		9 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage- extends along the landwash N <sup>th</sup> b W <sup>t</sup> and S <sup>th</sup> b E <sup>t</sup> fifty-two yards. It is bounded on the N <sup>th</sup> by room No. 47 and on the S <sup>th</sup> by the fishhouse of room No. 49. The flake runs between parallel lines from the extremes of the landwash line.

49	Step <sup>n</sup> Abbott's Room	Bayly's Cove, Bonavista	Sarah Abbott, Bonavista	Left by the claimant's husband	Sarah Abbott, Bonavista	In right of inheritance		9 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash N <sup>th</sup> & S <sup>th</sup> one hundred and twenty-three yards, bounded on the N <sup>th</sup> by room No. 48, and on the S <sup>th</sup> by the fishhouse of room No. 50. The flakes and erections stand between parallel line running E <sup>t</sup> from the extremes of the landwash line.
50	Slate's Room	Do.	John Abbott, Bonavista		William Hicks & Co., Bonavista	By lease	£4 per annum	9 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends N <sup>th</sup> & S <sup>th</sup> along the landwash ninety yards, bounded on the N <sup>th</sup> by a fishhouse of room No. 49, and on the S <sup>th</sup> by unoccupied ground where a fisher formerly stood.
51	Mockbeggar Room	Bonavista	Sam <sup>l</sup> . Rolls Pool	Inherited by will from Sam <sup>l</sup> . White	B. Lester & Co., Pool	By lease	£35 Per Annum	10 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has three stages, extends along the landwash N <sup>th</sup> and S <sup>th</sup> two hundred and twenty yards, bounded on the N <sup>th</sup> by the sea and on the S <sup>th</sup> by a void space where a ship's room formerly stood. The stores and other erections stand between parallel lines running E <sup>t</sup> from the extremes of the landwash line.
52	Beaumont's Flake	Mockbeggar Bonavista	John Beaumont, Bonavista	Built by the claimant, 1804	J. Beaumont, Bonavista	In right of building and possession		10 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	The annex'd number consists only of a flake for curing fish brought from the Northern French shore. It extends along the beach N <sup>th</sup> & S <sup>th</sup> thirty-six yards, bounded on the N <sup>th</sup> by a void space where a ship's room once stood, and on the S <sup>th</sup> by a void space.
53	Ryder's Room	Newman's Point, Bonavista	B. Lester & Co., Pool	Devolved to the claimant for a debt	Thom <sup>s</sup> . Woodford & Rich <sup>d</sup> . Dyke, Bonavista	By lease	£10 Per Annum	10 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has one stage which bounds it on the S <sup>th</sup> . From the stage it extends along the landwash NW <sup>t</sup> fifty yards, the W <sup>t</sup> N <sup>th</sup> to the rocks

									on Newman's Point. The store, flakes are bounded by Mockbeggar Marsh.
54	Brown's Room	Bonavista	Jos <sup>h</sup> . Brown & Co. and their brothers and sisters	Built originally by the claimant's family	John Bland, Bonavista	By lease	£12 Per Annum	10 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash N <sup>th</sup> and S <sup>th</sup> thirty yards, bounded on the N <sup>th</sup> by a void room called Tilly's room, and on the S <sup>th</sup> by the oilhouse and store. The flakes and other erections are comprised between two parallel lines running E <sup>t</sup> from the extremes of the landwash line.
55	Burton's Room	Do.	Steph <sup>n</sup> . Burton & his brothers	Built originally by claimant's family	S. Burton and Humber Green	In right of inheritance		10 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has no stage. The beach and flake extend along the landwash S <sup>th</sup> from the store of room No. 54, fifty-six yards and on the S <sup>th</sup> it is bounded by a line E <sup>t</sup> & W <sup>t</sup> of room No. 56.
56	Rolle's Room	Bonavista	John Bland, Bonavista	Purchased from the proprietor	J. Bland, Bonavista	In right of purchase	£30	11 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has one stage. A compass line extending from Burton's room along the landwash S <sup>th</sup> forty yards, then SE <sup>t</sup> forty yards to the stage, then NE <sup>t</sup> forty yards to the W <sup>t</sup> side of Mifflin's room, then N <sup>th</sup> to the South side of Burton's room fifty-six yards, then W <sup>t</sup> to the landwash completely encloses this room.
57	Walkham's Room	Do.	Solomon Mifflin, Bonavista	Partly purchased and partly	S. Mifflin, Bonavista	In right partly of purchase		11 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has two stages. A line extending from the bank over the western stage S <sup>th</sup> fifty-six yards,

				built by the claimant's family		& partly by inheritance			then ENE <sup>t</sup> fifty-nine yards, then E <sup>t</sup> eighty-two yards, then S <sup>th b</sup> E <sup>t</sup> one hundred yards to Walkham's Brook completely encloses this room. The N <sup>th</sup> line divides it from Rolle's room, the ENE <sup>t</sup> line from Burton's room and the S <sup>th b</sup> E <sup>t</sup> line from Newell's room. Within the boundary of this room stands a house with a small garden, inhabited by the widow Rolles. The house was built by the widow's husband and has with the garden, been held more than twenty years by her family, as a pofsefsion entirely independent of Walkham's room.
58	Newell's Room	Bonavista	Tho <sup>s</sup> . Newell & Giles Hosier, Bonavista	Originally built by the claimant's family	G. Hosier, Bonavista	In right of inheritance & by private agreement		12 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room has one stage. From the corner of the bridge at Walkham's Brook it extends N <sup>th b</sup> E <sup>t</sup> seventy-six yards which line divides it from Walkham's room, then E <sup>t b</sup> S <sup>th</sup> one hundred and sixteen yards, then S <sup>th b</sup> W <sup>t</sup> to the harbour pond eighty-four yards, then WNW <sup>t</sup> to the bridge at Walkham's Brook one hundred yards, then SSW <sup>t</sup> along the harbour beach one hundred and thirty-two yards, where it is bounded by Mayne's flake.
59	Mayne's Store	Do.	John Mayne, Bonavista	Built by the claimant, 1804	J. Mayne, Bonavista	In right of building and possession		12 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1805	The annex'd number consists of a fishstore built in part over the harbour pond, behind the fishstore of room No. 58, and is distant from any fishing room.
60	Fovey's Room	Do.	James Fovey, St. John's	Originally built by	John Mayne, Bonavista	By lease	£9 Per Annum	12 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1805	This room consists of a stage, formerly an island stage, but now

				the claimant					landed upon the beach of room No. 58, and a flake erected upon the harbour pond, to which there is a passage thro' room No. 58.
61	Hooper's Room	Do.	Steph <sup>n</sup> Hooper, Bonavista	Originally built by the claimant	Richd & Thoms Ryder, Bonavista	By lease		20 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> , 1805	This room consists of a stage, formerly an island stage, but now landed upon the beach of room No. 58, and of a flake erected upon the harbour pond to which there is a passage thro' room No. 58.
62	Mayne's Flake	Bonavista	John Mayne, Bonavista	Built by the claimant, 1805	John Mayne, Bonavista	In right of building and possession		20 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> , 1805	The annex'd number consists of a flake erected for the purpose of drying fish brought from the North shore. It extends along the beach from Newell's flake SSW <sup>t</sup> sixty-two yards, bounded on the South by a void called Dewy's Room.
63	Dewy's store & dwelling house	Do.	John Green, Trinity	Built by the Lessee	John Bullen, Bonavista	By lease	£4 Per Annum	20 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> 1805	The annex'd number consists of a store house and dwelling house which are the only remaining vestiges of the fishing room called Dewy's room.
64	Shambler's Room	Do.		Built originally by the claimant's family	B. Lester & Co., Pool	By lease	£30 per annum	20 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> , 1805	This room has two stages. From a void space called Dewy's Room it extends along the lanswash SSW <sup>t</sup> one hund <sup>d</sup> and fifty yards to the Northern boundary of Kean's room. The stores, flakes, and houses are comprised between parallel lines from the extremes of the landwash line.
65	Kean's Room	Do.	Capt Kean of the Navy	Originally built by the claimant's	Tho <sup>s</sup> Street, Pool	By lease		20 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> , 1805	This room has two stages. From Shambler's room which bounds it on the N <sup>th</sup> it extends along the beach WSW <sup>t</sup> ninety yards, then S <sup>th</sup> W <sup>t</sup>

				family					back to waste or garden ground, bounded on the W <sup>t</sup> by Skiffington's room. The stores and other erections lay on the back of the landwash line.
66	Skiffington's Room	Bonavista	Tho <sup>s</sup> Street, Pool	Purchased by the claimant	Tho <sup>s</sup> Street, Pool	In right of purchase		20 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash line from the south boundary of Kean's room WNW <sup>t</sup> fifty-nine yards. The erections are comprised between parallel lines running SSW <sup>t</sup> from the extremes of the landwash line.
67	White's Room	Do.	Cha <sup>s</sup> Saint, Bonavista	Purchased by the claimant	C. Saint, Bonavista	In right of purchase		20 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash from the W <sup>t</sup> boundary of Skiffington's room W <sup>t</sup> forty-seven yards, S <sup>th b</sup> W <sup>t</sup> to the back vacant ground. The erections use all to the eastward of this line.
68	Cole's Room	Do.	B. Lester & Co., Pool	Purchased by the claimant	W <sup>m</sup> Cole, Bonavista			20 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash from the W <sup>t</sup> boundary of White's room W <sup>t</sup> forty yards, then SSW <sup>t</sup> to the back ground. The flakes and other erections stand to the Eastward of this line.
69	Ford's Room	o.	B. Lester & Co., Pool	Purchased by the claimant	G. Ford			20 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash from the W <sup>t</sup> boundary of Cole's room WNW <sup>t</sup> seventy yards, then SSW <sup>t</sup> to the back ground. The flakes and other erections stand to the Eastward of this line.
70	Old Room	Corneil, Bonavista	B. Lester & Co., Pool	Purchased by the claimant	B. Lester & Co., Pool	In right of purchase		20 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends along the landwash from Ford's room W <sup>t</sup> sixty-seven yards, then S <sup>th b</sup> E <sup>t</sup> towards the open country- is bounded on the W <sup>t</sup> by unoccupied ground. The stores range S <sup>th b</sup> E <sup>t</sup>



									from the landwash line.
71	Brown's Room	Do.	Jos <sup>h</sup> . Brown, his brothers and sister, Bonavista	Originally built by the claimant's family	Jos <sup>h</sup> . Brown & Co., Bonavista	In right of inheritance		20 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 1805	This room has one stage, extends from a brook that bounds the void space to the W <sup>t</sup> of Old Room along the landwash sixty-seven yards, then SW <sup>t b</sup> S <sup>th</sup> to the open country, bounded on the W <sup>t</sup> by unoccupied ground formerly a fishing room.
72	Cobb's Room	Do.	Jos <sup>h</sup> . Brown, Bonavista	Purchased at a public sale by order of the Surrogate court which attach <sup>d</sup> it for debt 25 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 1805	John Kelly Sen <sup>r</sup> . & Co., Bonavista	By lease	£10 Per Annum	26 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 1805	This room has one stage, to which there is a passage thro' Brown's room, behind the landwash line of which it extends NW <sup>t b</sup> W <sup>t</sup> thirty yards, then SE <sup>t</sup> to the back of Brown's flake eighty-two yards, then SW <sup>t b</sup> S <sup>th</sup> towards the open country which line divides it from Brown's eastern flake below his dwelling house.
73	Stockly's Room	Pinchard's Island	Sam <sup>l</sup> Stockly & Co., Pinchard's Island	Built by the claimant, 1802	Sam <sup>l</sup> Stockly & Co., Pinchard's Island	In right of building and possession		26 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage, extends E <sup>t</sup> & W <sup>t</sup> along the landwash of a small beach bounded on all sides by unoccupied ground and occupies fifty yards on the landwash line.
74	Hick's Room	Do.	Edw <sup>d</sup> Hicks & John Norris, Pinchard's Island	Built by the claimants, 1802	Edw <sup>d</sup> Hicks & John Norris, Pinchard's Island	In right of building and possession		26 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage. It extends along the landwash NNE <sup>t</sup> and SSW <sup>t</sup> fifty yards, and is bounded on each side by unoccupied ground.
75	Burry's Room	Do.	David Burry, Pinchard's Island	Built by the claimant, 1801	David Burry, Pinchard's Island	In right of building and possession		26 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> , 1805	This room has one stage. It extends along the landwash NNW <sup>t</sup> and SSE <sup>t</sup> thirty yards, bounded on each side by unoccupied ground.
76	Dick's Room	Pouch Island, Do.	John Dick, Pouch Island	Built by the	John Dick, Pouch Island	In right of building		26 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup> , 1805	This is a solitary room with one stage and occupies an unlimited

				claimant, 1803		and possession			extent in the landwash, no other fishery being kept upon the island.
77	Over's Room	Tickle Cove, Do.	Hen <sup>y</sup> Over, Tickle Cove	Built by the claimant, 1806	Hen <sup>y</sup> Over, Tickle Cove	In right of building and possession		6 <sup>th</sup> July, 1806	This room has one stage. The flake extends E <sup>t</sup> and W <sup>t</sup> along a beach fifty yards, and the stage and houses to the Eastward of the beach on the side of a hill. It is bounded on the W <sup>t</sup> by unoccupied beach, and on the E <sup>t</sup> by a hill, and behind the beach by a pond.
78	Parker's Room	W <sup>t</sup> side of Newell's Island	John Parker, Greenspond	Built by the claimant, 1806	John Parker, Greenspond	In right of building and possession		20 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1806	This room has one stage. It is bounded on the North by unoccupied ground, and on the South by Brown's room.
79	Black's Room	Gooseberry Is <sup>ld</sup> . Greenspond	Hen <sup>y</sup> . & Pat <sup>k</sup> . Black, Gooseberry Island	Inherited from their ancestors	Hen <sup>y</sup> . & Pat <sup>k</sup> . Black, Gooseberry Island	In right of inheritance and possession		23 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1806	This room has one stage. It is bounded on all sides by unoccupied ground on the North side of the island.
80	Picket's Room	Vere Island, Greenspond	John Picket & Co., Vere Island	Purchased from the original owner	John Picket & Co., Vere Island	In right of purchase and possession		23 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1806	This room has one stage. It is bounded on all sides by unoccupied ground on the North side of the island.
81	Lane's Room	Do.	Roger Lane & Co., Vere Island, Greenspond	Originally built by the proprietor	Roger Lane & Co., Vere Island	In right of building and possession		23 <sup>d</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1806	This room has one stage. It is bounded on all sides by unoccupied ground and stands on the W <sup>t</sup> side of the Isl <sup>d</sup> .
82	Norris' Room	Pinchard's Island, Greenspond	John Norris, Pinchard's Island	Built by the proprietor	John Norris, Pinchard's Island	In right of building and possession		24 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1806	This room has one stage. It is bounded on all sides by unoccupied ground there being no other fishery near enough to interfere with it.
83	Bourne's Room	Grout's Island, Greenspond	John Bourne, Greenspond	Purchased	John Bourne, Greenspond	In right of purchase and possession		24 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1806	This room has one stage and is entirely insulated so that no other fishery is near enough to interfere with it.
84	Kelly's Room	Broad Cove, Bonavista	John Kelly & John Hogan,	Built by the	Kelly & Hogan, Broad	In right of building		27 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1806	This room has one stage. It stands on the North side of the beach and is

		Bay	Broad Cove	claimants, 1805	Cove	and possession			the only fishery in Broad Cove
85	Quintum's Room	Red Cliff Island	John Quintum & his brothers, Red Cliff Island	Originally built by the claimant;s father	John Quintum & his brothers, Red Cliff Island	In right of original possefsion		27 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1806	This room has two stages and possefsing an insular situation is in no danger of encroachment from other fisheries.
86	Clinch's Room	Salvage	John Clinch, Salvage	Built by the claimant	John Clinch, Salvage	In right of building and possession		27 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1806	This room has one stage. It is bounded on the South by Haskell's room, and on every other side by unoccupied ground.
87	Haskell's Room	Do.	Haskell & Boon, Salvage	Built by the claimants	Haskell & Boon, Salvage	In right of building and possession		28 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1806	This room has one stage. It is bounded Northward by Clinch's room, and on every other side by unoccupied ground
88	Dick's Room	Do.	Wm Dick, Salvage	Built by the claimant, 1806	Wm Dick, Salvage	In right of building and possession		28 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1806	This room has one stage. It is bounded on all sides by unoccupied ground.
89	Grey's Room	Flat Island	Grey & Collins, Flat Island	Built by the claimants, 1806	Grey & Collins, Flat Island	In right of building and possession		28 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1806	This room has one stage, and there is no other fishery within its neighbourhood to interfere with its boundary.
90	Bullock's Room	Open Hole, Bonavista Bay	John & Luke Gould, Open Hole	Originally built by the claimants	John & Luke Gould, Open Hole	In right of building and possefsion		28 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1806	This room has one stage. It is bounded Northward by Gould's room and on every other side by unoccupied ground.
91	Gould's Room	Do.	John & Luke Gould, Open Hole	Originally built by the claimants	John & Luke Gould, Open Hole	In right of building and possession		28 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup> , 1806	This room has one stage. It is bounded Southward by Bullock's room, and on every other side by unoccupied ground.

NATURE OF PROPERTY CLAIM AND TYPE OF ENTERPRISE FOR NORTHERN BONAVISTA BAY FISHING ROOMS, 1805-1806										
ROOM #	NATURE OF PROPERTY CLAIM			TYPE OF ENTERPRISE (CLAIMANT)			TYPE OF ENTERPRISE (OCCUPANT)			SHORE FRONTAGE (YDS.)
	INHER	BUILD	PURCH.	PLANTER		MERCH.	PLANTER		MERCH.	
1	X			X			X			36
2	X			X			X			20
3	X			X			X			56
4			X	X			X			48
5			X			X			X	278
6			X			X			X	191
7			X	X			X			120
8		X		X			X			120
9			X	X			X			128
10		X		X			X			120
11		X		X			X			19
12		X		X			X			57
13		X		X			X			35
14	X			X			X			20
15			X			X			X	100
16		X		X			X			50
17	X					X			X	87
18			X	X			X			60
19		X		X			X			--
20	X			X			X			60
21			X			X			X	87
22	X					X			X	120
23		X		X			X			--
24		X		X			X			100
25	X			X			X			--
73		X		X			X			--
74		X		X			X			50
75		X		X			X			30

76		X		X		X		--
78		X		X		X		--
82		X		X		X		--
83			X	X		X		--
32	8	15	9	26	6	26	6	1992

Table 7.2: Northern Bonavista Bay Fishing Rooms by Nature of Claim and Enterprise Type, 1805-1806

NATURE OF PROPERTY CLAIM AND TYPE OF ENTERPRISE FOR CENTRAL BONAVISTA BAY FISHING ROOMS, 1805-1806									
ROOM NO.	NATURE OF PROPERTY CLAIM			TYPE OF ENTERPRISE (CLAIMANT)			TYPE OF ENTERPRISE (OCCUPANT)		
	INHER.	BUILD	PURCH.	PLANTER		MERCH.	PLANTER		MERCH.
42	X			X			X		
43		X				X			X
44		X				X			X
79	X			X			X		
80			X	X			X		
81			X	X			X		
86		X		X			X		
87		X		X			X		
88		X		X			X		
89		X		X			X		
10	2	6	2	8		2	8		2

Table 7.3: Central Bonavista Bay Fishing Rooms by Nature of Claim and Enterprise Type, 1805-1806

NATURE OF PROPERTY CLAIM AND TYPE OF ENTERPRISE FOR SOUTHERN BONAVISTA BAY FISHING ROOMS, 1805-1806										
ROOM NO.	NATURE OF PROPERTY CLAIM			TYPE OF ENTERPRISE (CLAIMANT)			TYPE OF ENTERPRISE (OCCUPANT)			SHORE FRONTAGE (YDS.)
	INHER.	BUILD	PURCH.	PLANTER		MERCH.	PLANTER		MERCH.	
26			X	X			X			74
27		X		X			X			42
28	X			X			X			43
29	X			X			X			37
30	X			X			X			63
31	X			X			X			--
32		X		X			X			100
33		X		X			X			100
34		X		X			X			100
35		X		X			X			50
36		X		X			X			65
37	X			X			X			70
38		X		X			X			70
39	X			X			X			30
40		X		X			X			--
41		X		X			X			--
45	X			X			X			146
46	X			X			X			63
47	X			X			X			8
48	X			X			X			53
49	X			X			X			123
50	X			X			X			90
51	X					X			X	220
52		X		X			X			36
53			X			X	X			50
54	X			X			X			30
55	X			X			X			56
56			X	X			X			40
57			X	X			X			82

58	X			X			X			132
59		X		X			X			--
60		X		X			X			--
61		X		X			X			--
62		X		X			X			62
63		X		X			X			--
64	X			X					X	159
65	X					X			X	90
66			X			X			X	59
67			X	X			X			47
68			X			X	X			40
69			X			X	X			70
70			X			X			X	67
71	X			X			X			67
72			X	X			X			82
77		X		X			X			50
84		X		X			X			--
85	X			X			X			--
90	X			X			X			--
91		X		X			X			--
49	21	18	10	42		7	44		5	2766

Table 7.4: Southern Bonavista Bay Fishing Rooms by Nature of Claim and Enterprise Type, 1805-1806

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